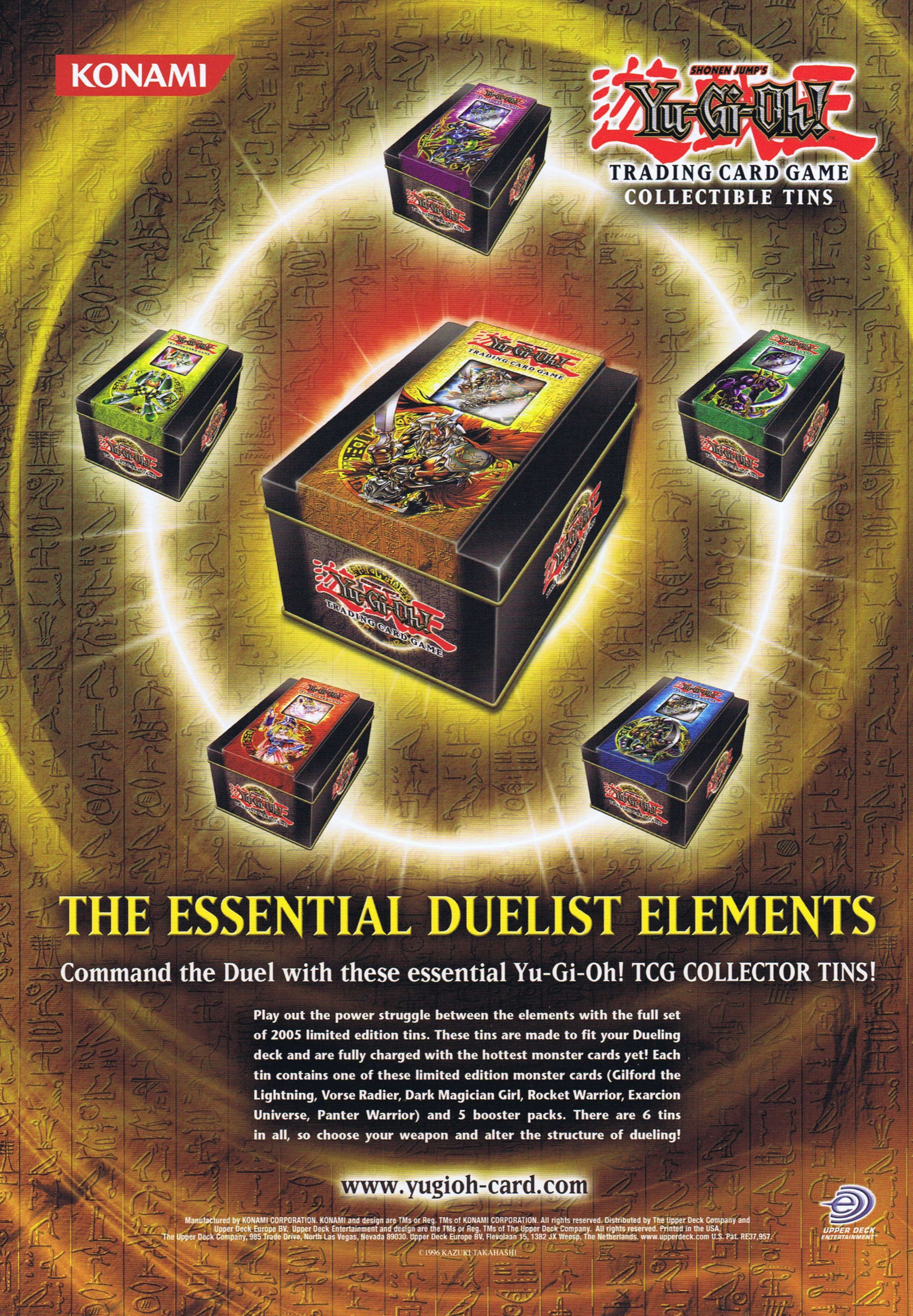

GAMECUBE • DS • GBA • REVOLUTION
NGC
ISSUE #115
JANUARY 2006 / £3.99
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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
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FIRST PLAY
POKÉMON DUNGEON
Now you're the 'mon!
NEW SHOTS
MARIO & LUIGI
PARTNERS IN TIME
Their funniest adventure yet
PLUS!
2006 BLOWOUT
Mario Party 7
Sonic Riders
Harvest Moon
Electroplankton
Resident Evil DS
Viewtiful Joe DS
Super Monkey Ball DS
Metroid Prime Hunters
Brain Exercise (really!)
EXCLUSIVE
STOP PRESS!
REVOLUTION LAUNCH DATE REVEALED
PLUS! Find out how Zelda will use the new controller
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
Twilight Princess
Link kicks off our 2006 preview special!
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UPPER DECK ENTERTAINMENT

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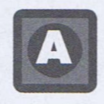
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HAPPY NEW YEAR





And what a year it promises to be! Perhaps the most crucial year in Nintendo's long and illustrious history. Iwata has already said that if Revolution doesn't perform as well as Gamecube, it will be a failure. Yet with the new controller powering games such as *Smash Bros*, *Pikmin* and *Zelda* (yes, you heard right – *Zelda*. Go to page 6 for more details), it's easily the most exciting console in the world, and we simply can't see it being anything other than a huge success.

While Revolution is poised to be the console of 2006, DS is definitely the success story of 2005. With an online game of *Mario Kart DS* at our fingertips, it was hard to get any actual work done this issue. Although we reviewed the game last month, the online function wasn't up and running. Now we've played it and can report that it all works perfectly.

And if 2005 was good for DS, then 2006 could be even better, with *Metroid Prime Hunters*, *Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time* (both previewed this issue) and *Animal Crossing* (reviewed on p38) all released before March. Plus we hear that a redesigned DS will be unveiled at E3 in May. You heard it here first!



TURN OVER THE PAGE!
Head over to page 6 now for some breaking Revolution and Zelda news!





SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Head over to page 71 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands.

THIS MONTH
WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING...

GERAINT



■ It's got to be *Mario and Luigi: Partners in Time*. I'm a huge fan of the original on GBA, and this one has really lived up to my expectations. I'm finding it a bit easy at the moment (I haven't finished it yet) but the dual screen use is genius.

MARTIN



■ I've dug out my copy of *Advance Wars 2* on GBA again this month. I was totally stuck on one of the missions originally, but the arrival of the Micro persuaded me to give it one more try. It's still bloody hard in some places mind.

GREENER



■ What have I played the most this month? I hate to say it, but it has to be *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* on the DS. Not because I wanted to, but because I had to keep revisiting it, just to check if it really was quite as bad as I thought…

THOMAS



■ I've been getting stuck into Mission mode on *Mario Kart DS* mostly. There's just something strangely addictive about those bite-sized driving challenges, and the allure of those elusive three gold stars is just too hard to resist.

NGC'S FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!



BEST OF 2005

OUR END-OF-YEAR AWARDS

Will it be *FIFA*? Will it be *Medabots Infinity*? The top games of the year revealed!

ANIMAL CROSSING

BABY, BABY, IT'S A WILD WORLD…

Online, on DS, and in the palm of your hand. Four pages of neighbourly mischief, family fun and dodgy T-shirts start here.

Discover how Zelda will use the Revolution's controller



3 PAGE 42

MARIO PARTY 7
JELLY AND ICE CREAM TIME
You demanded it… and Nintendo delivered it! Hang on a minute, that's not quite right…



4 PAGE 72

THE NINTENDO COMMANDMENTS
AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY…
…Shigsy added 'breasts' to the long list of things you'll never see on Nintendo.



TIMEWARP
BLASTS FROM THE PAST
Join Britain's foremost Nintendo retro expert – and Mark Green – for six pages of exhaustively researched historical FACTS.



5 PAGE 82

WHAT'S IN NGC?
Spoiler alert! Magazine contents revealed below!

PREVIEWS
We'd review them, but they're not finished yet.









NEWS
The pages that come with a large pinch of salt.

OTHER STUFF
Not news, not reviews, not previews… what, then?



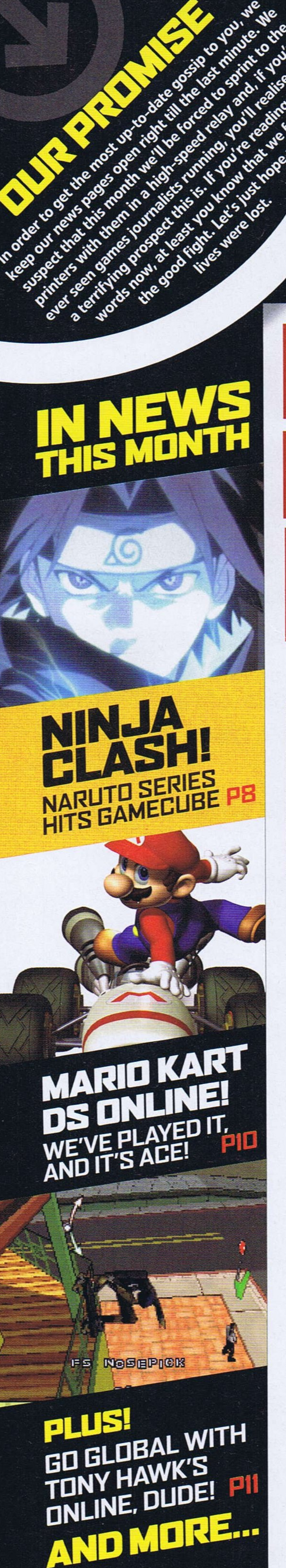
REVIEWS
Now with DS and GBA games mixed in!

OUR PROMISE

In order to get the most up-to-date gossip to you, we keep our news pages open right till the last minute. We suspect that this month we'll be forced to sprint to the printers with them in a high-speed relay and, if you've ever seen games journalists running, you'll realise what a terrifying prospect this is. If you're reading these words now, at least you know that we fought the good fight. Let's just hope no lives were lost.

NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK



REVOLUTION LAUNCH DATE REVEALED



Plus! ZELDA to be playable on Nintendo's new console

We can exclusively reveal that Revolution will be launched in late 2006. While we don't know the exact day, it seems that it will most likely arrive in the UK in November, just in time for Christmas.

But that's not all. We've also discovered that *Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, while still set for release on Gamecube, will be coming out close to the Revolution's launch date – the reason being that it will be playable on Revolution too, with special features enabling you to use the new controller. To find out more about this astounding news, as well as some details about how this could work, go to page 14 now.

Struggling to take all that in? Well, so are we, but despite having to wait nearly 11 months to get our hands on Revolution and *Zelda*, we think it could turn out to be a good thing for the long-term future of Nintendo's new console. After all, isn't it better for Nintendo to make sure that the console and game are as good as they can be, rather than rushing a launch, like, say, Xbox 360?

In some ways it's to be expected. We already know that Nintendo has suggested to developers that projects can be started on Gamecube development kits, since the architectures of the two machines share some properties. With this in mind, bringing *Zelda* to both consoles will not only be a relatively simple process, but will also get more copies of the game into the hands of gamers. And anyway, who could possibly grumble with the prospect of *Zelda* being one of the first big games to help get you to grips with Nintendo's fantastic innovation?





CENSORED!

Child's play or not? You (or your mum) now decides...

Revolution will include a so-called Play Control System. It's basically a feature that, through a simple password system, will limit the kind of games that can be played, depending on the age rating. Every game manufactured for Revolution will have a code embedded in it, which tells the console what the age rating is. If the Revolution has been told to prohibit games of that type, then it will refuse to play them. Effectively, this means that gamers – or their parents – can stop anyone from playing 18 and 15-rated games.

Give the recent uproar over violent games, this might not be a bad thing. Games have long had age ratings on the box, but this doesn't seem to make much difference when it comes to people taking responsibility for what's being played, and this inevitably ends up with the games industry being blamed as being the root of all evil. Hopefully this new feature will go some way towards stopping this.



SMASH BROS DIRECTOR REVEALED

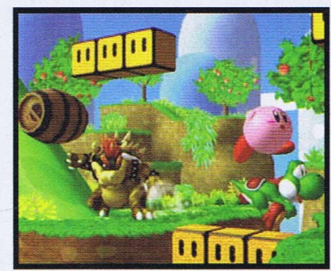
Who's the man for the melée?



Despite having left Nintendo's HAL Laboratories way back in 2003, Masahiro Sakurai, creator of *Kirby* and the mastermind behind *Meteos* and the best-selling *Smash Bros* series, is making a comeback as the creative force behind *Super Smash Bros* on the Revolution.

This is great news, not least because it means that the much-loved series is clearly in very good hands – hands that have yet to let us down (give or take a couple of *Kirby's*, anyway).

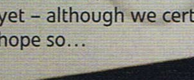
This is also a clear sign that the game is now well underway and could hopefully form part of the launch line-up, as hinted at by Iwata at E3 last May.





THE REVOLUTION STARTS HERE

Nintendo gets in there early...



In a somewhat... unusual move, Nintendo recently sent out a reminder to the press about the Revolution's E3 appearance. Now we all knew that there would be a big Revolution presence at the annual event, but it's strange to be given the heads-up so early. 165 days early, to be exact.

Anyway, Nintendo is going to blow the lid off all things Revolution on May 9th at its traditional pre-E3 press conference. Whether or not Nintendo plans to reveal anything before that, we don't actually know yet – although we certainly hope so...



NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

Showing you the ropes while playing the game…



△ *Metroid Prime* trains you as you play, helping you become immersed in the game.

NO. 6: TRAINING ON THE JOB

One of our pet hates must surely be tedious training modes or tutorials – having some disembodied voice telling you the ins and outs of jumping, picking up rubbish and shooting. Step after step of mind-numbingly tedious exercises that seem only to exist to stop you from playing the damn game. Developers really should take a leaf out of Nintendo's book.

Cast your minds back to moments like reclaiming the *Morphball* in *Metroid Prime*, picking up the wand for the first time in *Wind Waker*, or earning those special powers for *Luigi's Mansion*'s ghost-sucking vacuum. Every new skill and each new weapon in Nintendo's games is introduced subtly. You're presented with a new gameplay concept and immediately after, you're presented with a basic example to practise on, seamlessly woven into the fabric of the game. There's no fanfare as such – it's blended into the experience so it doesn't stick out like a sore thumb. The result is that you never feel as though you're being preached to. You're never reminded that this is the learning process and – perhaps most importantly – you never feel as though you're having your intelligence insulted.

So why is this so important? Well, for us at least, it helps the experience of playing seem more real. If you have tutorial sections shoe-horned into the opening stages of a game, it serves only to remind you that that's exactly what you're playing. It's a barrier – a cold, hard slap to the face, even – that brings you back to reality. It reminds you that the game you're playing isn't real and stops you from getting truly engrossed in what you're doing, shattering the game's atmosphere in one cruel stroke of idiocy.



△ No tutorial's are needed for *Luigi's Mansion* as training is subtly blended into the game.



△ Activate a super move and you'll get a pretty spectacular animation.



△ Much of the fighting system revolves around parries and dodges.



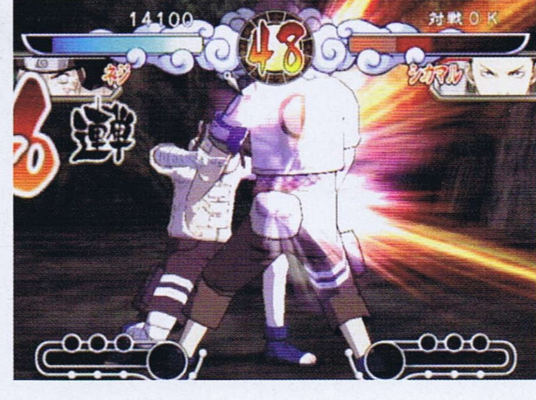
△ As you can see, a good old pummelling can still be dished out.

NARUTO CLASH OF NINJA

Anime-based battler squares up on Gamecube.



Featuring cel-shaded, fluidly animated characters against some nicely detailed backdrops, this one-on-one battler, based around the hugely popular *Naruto* anime series in Japan, is looking rather impressive so far.



The fighting itself takes place on a 2D plane in 3D arenas, with the only depth of movement coming from little sidesteps and dodges, a little like *Tekken*. However, the actual fighting system is a bit more unusual. Rather than creating a hell-for-leather offensive system, the game adopts a more defensive, counter attacking approach. Dodging and anticipating attacks are the precursor to laying down combos, stemming from a simpler, more accessible move set.

That's not to say you can't expect any bone-crunching specials, though. In fact, the game seems to excel here. As ever, you have a meter that builds as you fight, allowing you to let loose some bizarre but spectacular super moves.

All told, it's shaping up better than you might expect, with elements reminding us of the likes of *Jo Jo's Bizarre Adventure*, *Dragonball* and *Guilty Gear*.



△ The game's characters, art and animation all remain faithful.



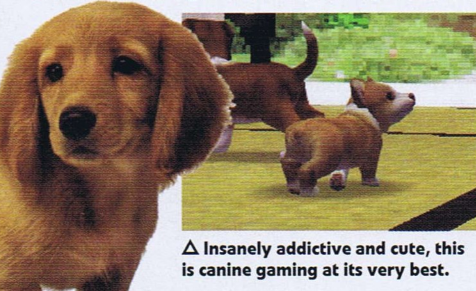
△ Characters are simple in design, but the 3D backgrounds aren't.

GONE TO THE DOGS

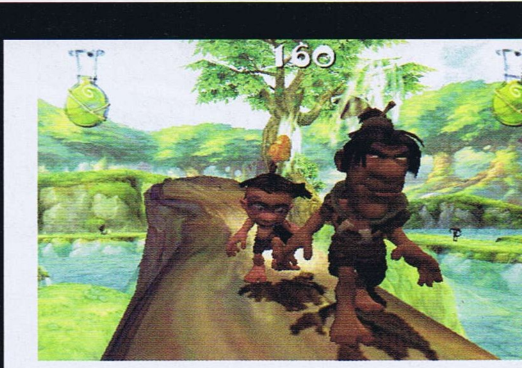
One million sales so far!



Just as we'd hoped – *Nintendogs* is doing wonders for the DS's popularity. To date, the game, on its three breed-specific forms, has sold over a million copies across Europe and is continuing to sell 100,000 copies a week! Interestingly, *Nintendogs* is now in the hands of half of all DS owners. Perhaps Nintendo's strategy of smaller, simpler games is really starting to pay off.



△ Insanely addictive and cute, this is canine gaming at its very best.



TAK TWO

New Ju Ju, with co-op.



You know, this isn't as bad as you might think. No, we haven't gone mental – we had a quick play on this before we went to press and it was strangely amusing. It's when you go into the split-screen mode, with each player taking control of a character, that it blossoms into something… well, maybe not *special*, but certainly interesting. More next month.

GET CONNECTED

Everything you need to know about DS online…

SO FAR SO GOOD…

International gaming in the palm of your hand

So we've had some time to settle with Nintendo's new Wi-Fi service, and we have to say that on the whole, we're very impressed. Both of the current online games are quick and easy to get set up, and are a fantastic bonus feature. There's no doubt that this online mode will help extend each game's longevity long after their respective single-player experiences have been exhausted, which makes them excellent value.

It's a bit annoying that you can't communicate with your fellow competitors, but in our opinion, that's something of a blessing too. It means that the experience of playing against strangers isn't anywhere near as intimidating as it is with something like X-Box Live.

The biggest test will be just how many people want to try the new service. The addition of *Animal Crossing* and *Metroid* will certainly help beef up the online roster a little, and hopefully the upcoming *Pokémon Diamond/ Pearl* will also be Wi-Fi compatible – and that's got to be a good thing.

MARIO KART DS

Race against anyone, anytime, anywhere…



WHAT YOU GET
- Two, three or four-player races, depending on who your DS can find.
- 20 available tracks.
- Four different match-up modes.



△ Beware nasty online 'snakers', who corner turbo. All. The. Time.



△ Not all of the tracks are available, but there's still a good selection.



△ Unlock all the different Karts to give you a better choice online.

ANY GOOD?

If you'd told us five years ago that we'd be able to lie in bed and play *Mario Kart* online, using a handheld with no wires, we'd have been thoroughly ashamed of you, shaking our heads at your obvious stupidity before showing you the door. But it's really here, it works, and best of all, it's absolutely free.

Sure, you can only have four people per game, but races are almost always fiercely competitive, and the thrill of racing against unseen human opponents is a particularly potent experience. On the whole, we've had very little trouble with it too. Matches against 'Friends' in the UK have always run perfectly smoothly, with extremely little in the way of lag. Continental games also run with very few problems – there are some small cases of opponents jumping around the screen as race data is updated, but nothing too annoying.

Worldwide, however, while fine for the most part, does seem to be the most laggy, and in a couple of races we've had the game freeze up on us completely for two to three seconds at a time. It's irritating, yes, but so infrequent that we wouldn't really class it as being a big problem.

DON'T BE AFRAID

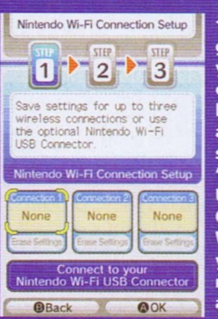
Honestly, there's quite literally a whole world of fun around the corner if you get your DS online. Best of all, setting everything up it isn't quite as daunting as you might expect…



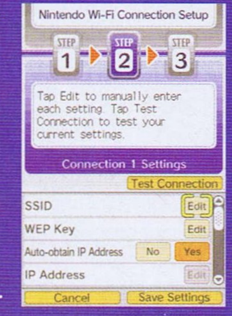
◁ **Basically, all you need to get online is broadband and some means of communicating wirelessly with your DS. You can do this using either a wireless router, or with Nintendo's own wireless dongle.**



◁ **The latter is probably your cheapest option. This little device slots into the USB port of a broadband-connected PC and allows your DS to access the Wi-Fi service through your computer.**



◁ **Once you've got it set up, you need to configure your DS. If you have a Wi-Fi dongle, simply select 'Nintendo USB Wi-Fi Connector'. With a router, your DS may find it automatically…**



◁ **…although, you may have to set it up manually, via this screen. Here you can enter the info. Normally, you'll just need your router's SSID and WEP key, but you can enter the other details here too.**



TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN SK8LAND

Now you can shout 'dude!' at baggy-trousered skaters worldwide…



WHAT YOU GET
- **Head-to-head matches against friends or international opponents.**
- **Seven different arenas to skate in.**
- **Download and upload your high scores and watch replays.**

ANY GOOD?
Much better than you might expect. It's easy to set up (although not quite as well presented as *Mario Kart*), and seeing as you only play against one other character, it's quick to find a game.

The only downside to it is born from the very nature of the game itself. When you play head to head, you rarely see your opponent, with only their ballooning score in the corner of the screen and the odd brief glimpse of them reminding you that you're actually playing against someone. As a result, it can often feel strangely soulless, as it's much more skill based than *Mario Kart*, with less of a sense of fun. However, having said that, this is still a real treat for *Hawk's* fans.

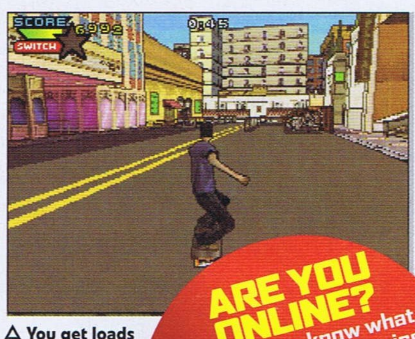
While the Head-to-Head mode pits you against a human opponent, the Classic mode lets you play for two minutes to achieve a high score. Better yet, you can upload the replay of your run and also download replays of the highest scoring runs and watch them directly on your DS. Suffice to say, watching the Pro Scoreboard masters at work is a real sight to behold, and it's almost as engrossing as playing yourself.



△ **Perhaps the biggest draw is the excellent high-score and replay system that lets you watch the best of the best in action.**



△ **Wireless mode pits you against a single opponent, which makes finding a game easy.**



△ **You get loads of shouty tunes.**

ARE YOU ONLINE?
We want to know what you think of the service. Found any hotspots in your area? Having trouble getting online? Made any nice decals for your Kart? Write in and tell us your experiences at the usual address…

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Some links to help you get the most out of Wi-Fi…

GETTING STARTED
www.nintendowifi.com
There's a wealth of information here to get you started. If you're having problems with your set-up, this is a good place to start. It has a list of compatible routers (which is well worth checking out), with step by step instructions on setting them up.



SK8LAND COMMUNITY
www.american-sk8land.com
There's already a pretty strong community here. When you access the Wi-Fi portion of the game, you'll be given a username and password you can use to log in. You can check scores here, download board skins, and even set up your own 'Skate Crews'.



PLAY AGAINST US
www.gamesradar.com
The forums here are a friendly space for you to find Friend codes for *Sk8land* and *Mario Kart*, and to talk tactics. You'll also find us here! Go to the Challenges and Online Gaming forum, then the 'Official Nintendo DS Wireless' thread to find NGC's Friend code.





◁ **Once that's sorted, check out your Friend code. This is the 12-digit number you need to connect to your friends online – you'll need their numbers too. This is the most reliable way to find games online.**



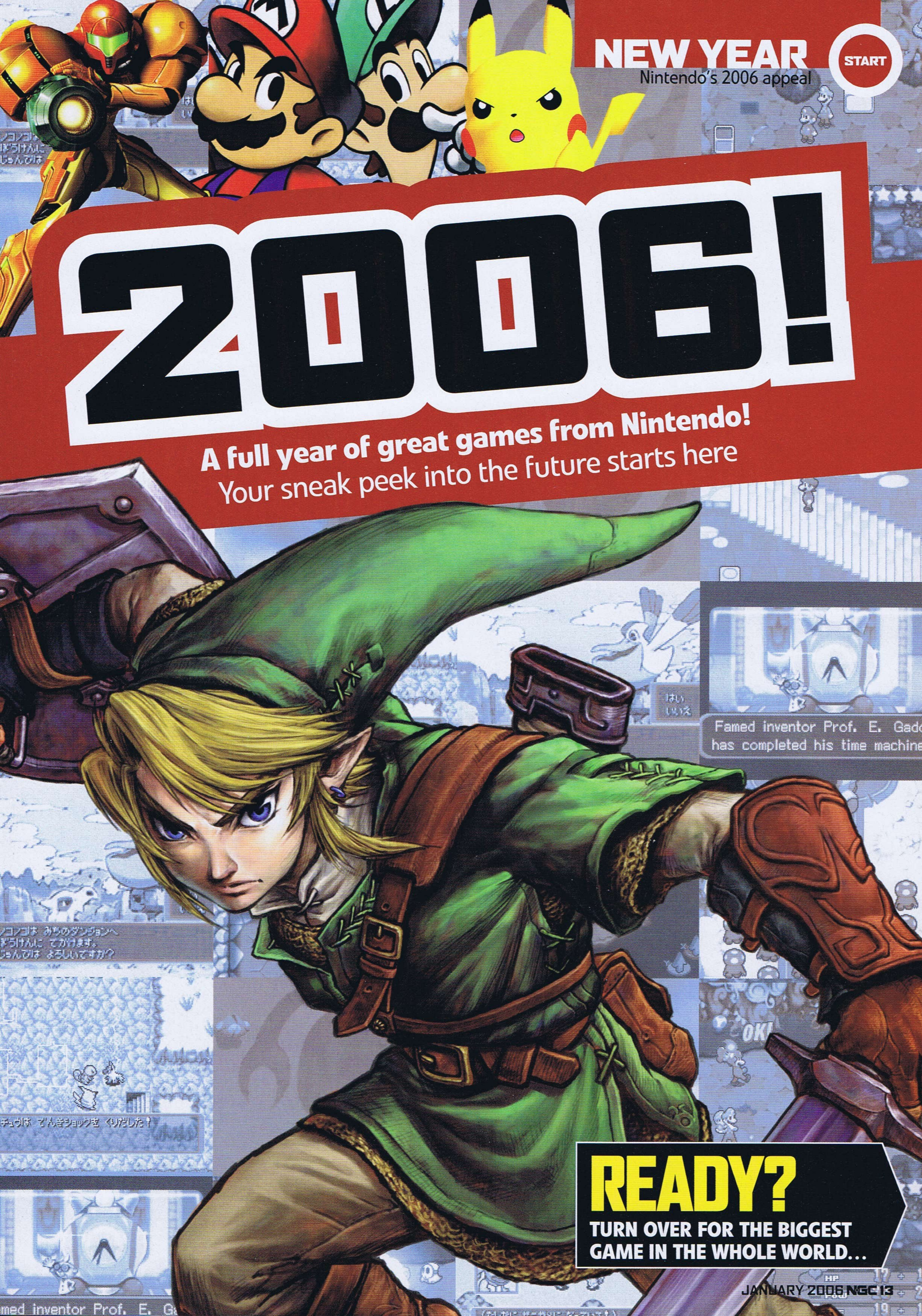
◁ **You're ready! Start with *Mario Kart*. Rivals pits you against similar opponents; Friends picks opponents from your list; Continental is for European matches; and Worldwide for international.**



◁ **To win a match, you race over four tracks. Courses are selected through a voting system. If the majority choose a track, you race on it; if all choices are different, a random track is used instead.**



◁ **Wins and losses are recorded on the Records screen, accessed from the main menu. Take care not to disconnect mid-race though, because that logs as a loss. And no one likes a bad loser anyway.**


NEW YEAR
Nintendo's 2006 appeal
START
2006!
A full year of great games from Nintendo!
Your sneak peek into the future starts here
Famed inventor Prof. E. Gad
has completed his time machin
READY?
TURN OVER FOR THE BIGGEST GAME IN THE WHOLE WORLD…



THE TWILIGHT REVOLUTION

Amazing new details on the game everyone's waiting for…



△ The vacant stare of a man who's just heard the news. See the foam forming at the sides of his mouth?



△ That's one bad baboon. He's got an explosive present just for you. And probably rabies too.



△ Later in the game, Link has to run this child through with a spear. Which is, of course, a complete lie.



△ Ooh, a chest! In a dungeon! Odds-on favourite is the Compass at 2-1. The Map is second at 7-2…



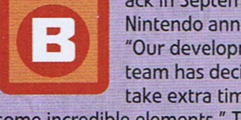
△ If the wand takes care of sword duties, then the shield must be assigned to its extension.







△ Now that Link is supposed to be a bit older, could there be the possibility of a bit of romance?



Back in September, Nintendo announced: "Our development team has decided to take extra time to add some incredible elements." These were elements that Miyamoto and *Zelda* Director Aonuma said were "simply far too good to leave out". And they weren't wrong.

NGC can exclusively reveal that *Twilight Princess* will be playable on the forthcoming Revolution using the upcoming console's unique controller. *Zelda* will actually 'bring in' the Revolution by launching fairly close to the new system, which is set to be released around November of next year, according to our sources.

"But they also promised it would be out on Gamecube!" we hear you cry. Well, they weren't lying. *Twilight Princess* will still be released on Gamecube – there's no changing that fact. However, when you insert the disc into your Revolution, you'll be given the option to use the Revolution's controller, with all the advantages that this will bring.

So what's the reason for all this? Well, it kind of makes sense. With Gamecube entering its twilight years, it gives retailers time to clear their Gamecube stock. And riding on the back of Revolution, it means that the game, which has now been in development for quite some time, will find as big an audience and gain the recognition it deserves – it will be the first port of call for those of us still with Gamecubes, and for those who have just bought a Revolution.

Anyway, we'll talk more about this in a minute. In the meantime, get your eyes over the page pronto for, well, lots more *Zelda*…



△ Just what every self-respecting bad guy needs – a sleeping hostage on a stick. Great for, you know, er… dipping in evil chocolate and roasting on evil fires.

READY? FIGHT!

Getting to grips with freehand nunchaku combat…

TAKE A STAND



△ The nunchaku control is obviously best suited to character movement. The analogue stick on the attachment is ideal for simply walking around, while one of the Z-triggers is perfectly placed for Link's lock-on ability.



△ The nunchaku analogue will then allow you to gracefully circle-strafe around your opponent. And the second Z trigger? Well, it would be rude not to assign Link's shield to that too. Movement and defence all on the one attachment? Perfect.

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD



△ The freehand controller will be used to allow you to attack with Link's sword, and it'll be absolutely perfect for this. Lock on, approach an enemy and then swing your arm like your life depends on it to dish out the damage. We know that there's a sword tutorial at the start of the game, and we'd imagine that this will have to change significantly.



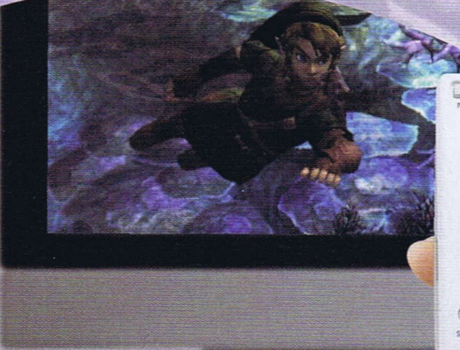
△ The sensitivity and accuracy of the freehand controller will allow the Revolution to know where it is in relation to the screen. Swing horizontally for a sideways slash, bring it down overarm style for a harder, vertical strike, and jab it towards the telly to poke your opponent away. Just make sure you aren't sitting next to anything breakable, eh?



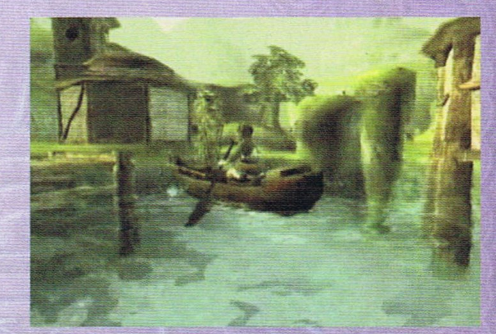
△ Link also has a finishing move – a jumping, downward stab against any grounded enemies. Surely nothing could be more satisfying than knocking an opponent off its feet before stabbing your freehand controller hard towards the ground. Gritting your teeth and making growling noises while you do it is, of course, entirely optional.



△ Just how tiring this will turn out to be after an entire dungeon is anyone's guess. We'll probably all end up with one arm significantly bigger than the other! Of course, we have to admit that actually fighting with the controller will make combat a much more involving and aggressive experience, and what more could you ask for?





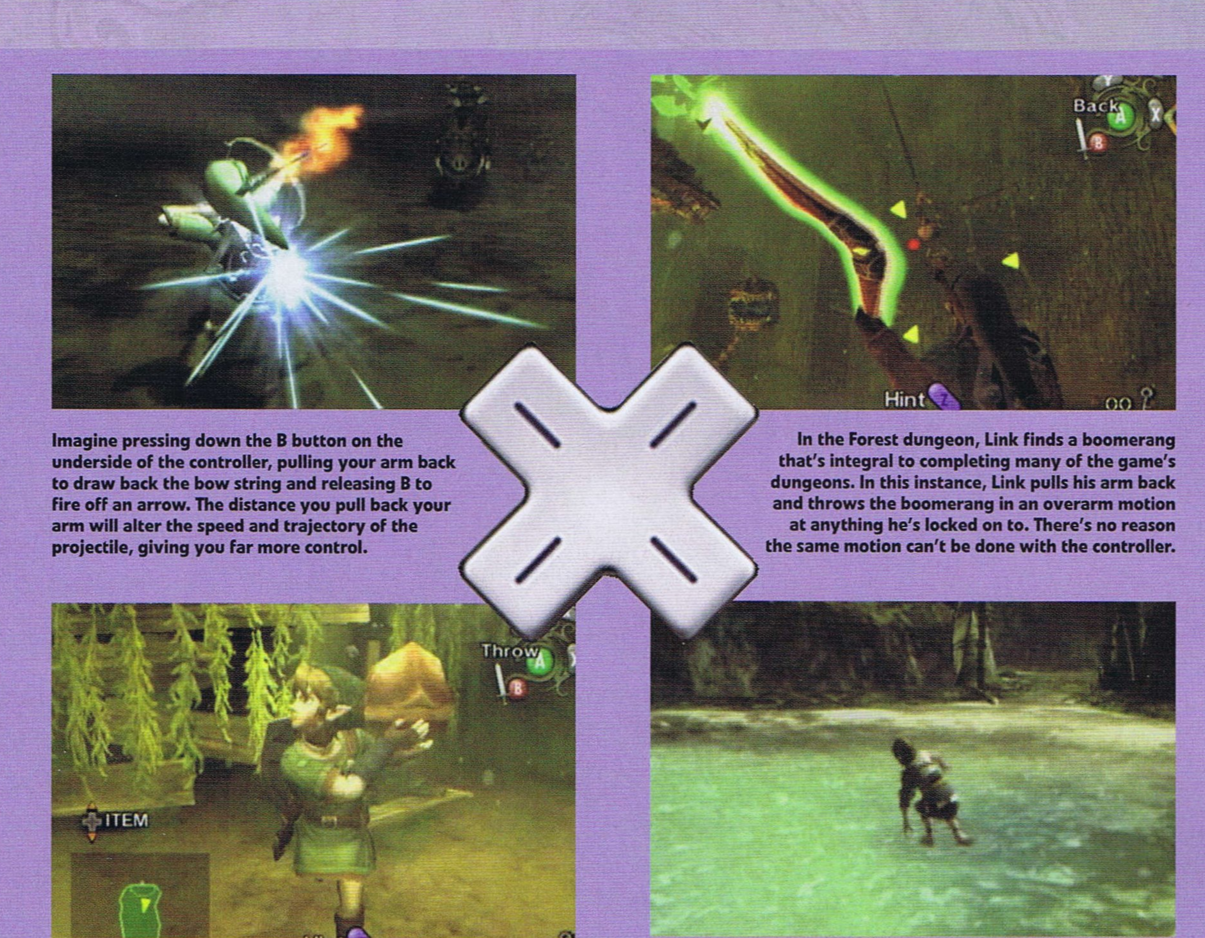


ROW YOUR BOAT

We know from the game's opening level that Link can row a canoe with a paddle, but can you use the controller to make the same movements, propelling you along? Sure, it'll make you look like a right idiot, but hey, in the privacy of our own bedrooms, we can get away with anything. Lock the door, folks. Lock the door.

WEAPON AND ITEM SELECTION

The D-Pad at the top of the freehand controller would be ideally suited to the function previously taken by the C buttons on the N64, and the X, Y and Z buttons on Gamecube. This will give you quick and easy selection of all your assigned items.



Imagine pressing down the B button on the underside of the controller, pulling your arm back to draw back the bow string and releasing B to fire off an arrow. The distance you pull back your arm will alter the speed and trajectory of the projectile, giving you far more control.

In the Forest dungeon, Link finds a boomerang that's integral to completing many of the game's dungeons. In this instance, Link pulls his arm back and throws the boomerang in an overarm motion at anything he's locked on to. There's no reason the same motion can't be done with the controller.

Bombs have always had just the one arcing trajectory in *Zelda* games. The only other option has been to simply place the things by your feet and then leg it to safety. For the first time, bombs can be more versatile, letting you wang 'em really hard into people's faces, or just do a gentle lob.

The controller would be great for capturing fairies and fish, and even better for carrying special water before chucking it over seeds and what not. Imagine having to aim the bottle to capture a fairy, or scoop it down low to fill it with water. The Revolution will know which way the bottle is being held, so why not?

RIDE 'EM COWBOY

Nintendo's Revolution teaser trailer suggested an obvious use of the controller in relation to Epona. You remember those two chefs that looked like they were chopping something? In one instance, the chef on the right is doing what appears to be some kind of riding motion – a little like he's holding the reigns of a horse.

This would be an amazing use of the controller – you'd be able to physically 'gee-up' Epona as you're pelting it around Hyrule field. Maybe pulling up the controller when you reach fences and low walls will be one way of getting Epona to jump over them. We know that the whip is used to give Epona bursts of speed, so surely emulating this movement with the controller is a must.









REEL 'EM IN

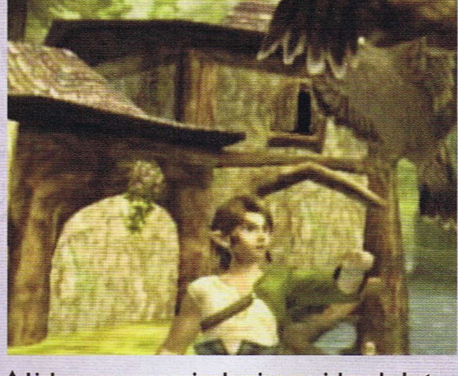
Fishing. It's obvious, isn't it? An *Ocarina* adventurer's favourite pastime has got to be a given, surely. It's one of the examples given in the Revolution Trailer, for starters, and the freehand controller would be perfect for this. Maybe the controller's rumble feature could be used to indicate the size of your potential catch, while the nunchaku attachment could act as some kind of reel, adding a little extra depth to the process of grounding your catch. The likelihood of some kind of fishing minigame then? 99.9%.



FREEVIEW

The ability to simply wave the controller around to easily look at your surroundings will certainly be a bonus. We've often found first-person views to be a little clumsy at times, especially considering that in many cases (particularly third-person adventures), you have to stand still while you're doing it.

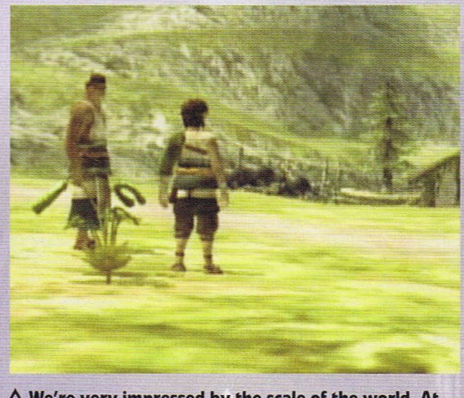
With just a simple press of a button and the precision that the freehand controller allows, this should be considerably less annoying on Revolution. And what about manually aiming with the bow or hook-shot when you're under pressure? Or on horseback even? It's things like this that the Revolution's controller will help make second nature.



△ Link can summon animals using special reeds. Just how many different beasts he can call on is unknown.



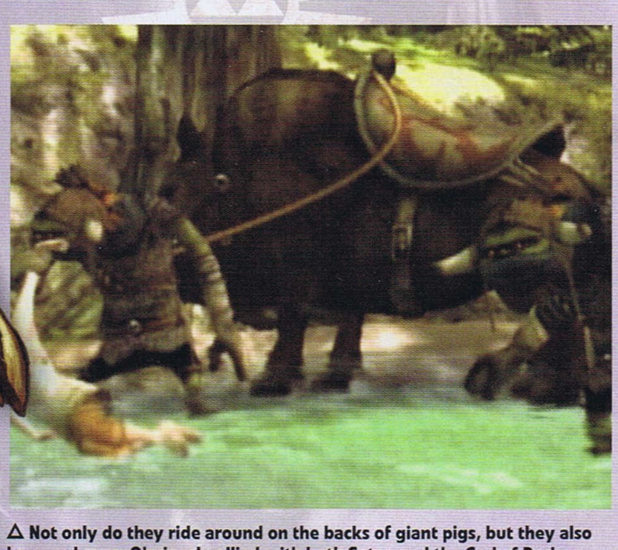
△ Naturally, the icons at the top of the screen will have to change. How will this work exactly? Magic!



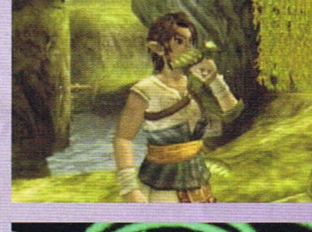
△ We're very impressed by the scale of the world. At 100 hours, Epona's gonna be absolutely knackered!



△ This bandit knocks Link out earlier in the game, but you get the chance to mess him up real nice later on.



△ Not only do they ride around on the backs of giant pigs, but they also have red eyes. Obviously allied with both Satan and the God of Pork.





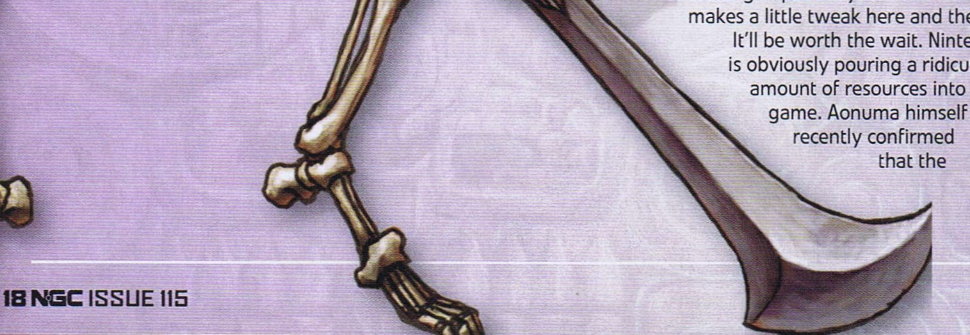
△ These holes are like spawn points for enemy Twilight, er, things.

Nintendo has never been one to rush an instalment of its best-loved series. After all, *Zelda* has long been synonymous with perfection (okay, so *Adventure of Link* was kind of rank, but you know what we mean) and we've long grown accustomed to waiting impatiently while Nintendo makes a little tweak here and there.

It'll be worth the wait. Nintendo is obviously pouring a ridiculous amount of resources into the game. Aonuma himself recently confirmed that the development team is the biggest ever to be charged with the creation of a *Zelda* game. Characters will be fully motion captured and each one individually modelled so that their costumes vary, while – and this is the bit you'll no doubt want to know – the game is set to be absolutely colossal in size.

While we'll admit that we take these gameplay time estimates with a pinch of salt, you'd be hard pushed not to imagine what a 100-hour (yes, that's what Aonuma said) *Zelda* would consist of. Apparently the figure takes into account players tackling the main adventure and story, as well as the huge number of side quests that will be available.

However, these little details play second fiddle to the announcement that it will be

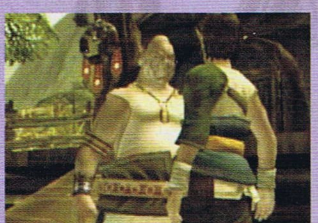





△ They've even captured the look of a man who's just let one go…



△ Link has just crept a little too close to the ever-encroaching Twilight Realm. It's here that Link finds his wolf form.

△ The Mayor of Toaru sends you off as the village's special envoy.



△ These parasites that have attacked Link are only visible through some special sense or vision. Possibly even smell.



△ How on earth will Midna's attacks work with the freehand controller? Honestly? We don't have a clue.



available on Revolution, as well as Gamecube. We always thought that it made sense to release this game on Revolution – it would make a brilliant launch title, for example – but going for the best of both worlds, rewarding those who invested in a Gamecube as well as giving any Revolution buyers something substantial and epic to play, is a pretty wise move. It'll mean that the game doesn't get lost at the back end of Gamecube's life cycle, which, may well have happened had it been released just for that console. By releasing it in this way, Nintendo is bridging the gap perfectly between one console and the other, and from one generation to the next.

Not only that, but having both control methods in Nintendo's most important franchise will help clarify in everyone's minds the incredible difference the Revolution's controller actually makes to playing games. We'd imagine that after playing it through with the Wavebird before migrating to the freehand controller will almost certainly feel liberating in some way. Do you want to just press a button to shoot an arrow or do you want to draw back the bow yourself to deliver shots of varying weight? Or how about executing horizontal or vertical slashes with the sword? Would it be better to just tap a different button or angle the analogue stick in different directions for the desired move, or would it be better to *actually make that motion yourself*?

We think you'll find the answer to that is *pretty goddamned obvious*…

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE?

We've touched on a number of possible uses for the Revolution controller, and now it's your turn. We want to hear what you think of this latest development. Can you wait another year? Do you think the wait will be worth it? What other uses can you come up with? Surely there must be something that we've missed. Write in and let us know!



Something musical? There's often been some kind of musical aspect to *Zelda* games, and *Wind Waker*'s wand would have been perfect with the freestyle controller. How about some kind of drumming malarkey, as hinted at in the Revolution teaser trailer?



We know that you can use two freehand controllers at the same time, but just how would that work? Wielding two swords at the same time, maybe?



Minigames are as essential a part of *Zelda* as Link himself, so surely the new controller could give birth to even better subgames. What kind of stuff do you think we can expect?



And what about Wolf Link? How the hell is *that* going to work with the new controller?

Once you've got yourself a bunch of ideas, scribble them down and send them to us at:

Twilight Revolution
NGC Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. You can email us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk.

If you like, you can chuck in a few drawings to explain your ideas. As always, we'll print the best. Or the funniest. Maybe even the worst…

2006!

We've had a fair old crack at the multiplayer of this now (no, not the *First Hunt Demo*) and we particularly like the fact that it plays a very frantic deathmatch – miles better than the one in *Echoes*.











△Play as the other Hunters in deathmatches.

△You can't beat a bit of camp-and-snipe fun.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- An all-new *Metroid* side story, taking place between *Prime* and *Echoes* on entirely new planets.
- Wi-Fi compatible, allowing you to fight against up to three players from around the world.
- Choose from four different control schemes, including the ability to use the touch screen for more accurate aiming.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
NST

What have they done before?
1080 Avalanche (NGC/89 90%)
The best boarder on Gamecube, with a fantastic time trial.

METROID PRIME HUNTERS



COMING TO DS IN MARCH

Hands-on play with the single-player mode, in which the Hunter becomes the hunted…

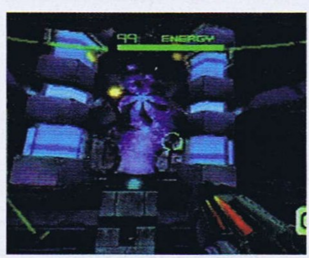


Metroid Prime Hunters is broken up into a series of specific missions, which you receive from the Galactic Federation before each level. The game's story basically revolves around an artefact hunt – technology of vast power that's scattered around the galaxy. Using her ship, Samus will need to travel around the system to search for them. However, these artefacts are not only sought after by Samus, but also by a number of other bounty hunters.

Each bounty hunter is nastier than the last, so Samus (whose suit is already powered up this time) will have to explore the game world to find new weapons to defeat them. Also, each of these bounty hunters is strangely similar to Samus (they each have a morphing ability, for example), which suggests to us that they'll all be unlockable for use in Wi-Fi deathmatches.

> "THE GAME'S STORY REVOLVES AROUND AN ARTEFACT HUNT: TECHNOLOGY OF VAST POWER"





△Expect plenty of big machines and room-filling puzzles to interact with.

NGC VERDICT

 UK MARCH
 US MARCH
 JAPAN TBA



We've sat with this for a couple of hours now and it's shaping up well. There are niggles – we found the controls (double-tapping the screen to jump) a bit fiddly on some of the harder platform sections, but we put that down to lack of practice. This is easily the best-looking DS game to date and we reckon it's going to be great.

ANTICIPATION RATING









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△ These Shroob minions capture the Princess when she arrives in the past.





△ Toadwood has been overrun by Shroobs, who are sucking the life from Toads.

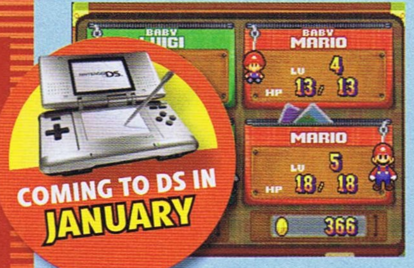
THE KNOWLEDGE

- Take Mario and Luigi back in time, team up with their younger selves and defeat the Mushroom Kingdom invaders.
- Control and solve complex puzzles with each brother individually, using the DS's four face buttons.
- There are lots of turn-based battles, which see the return of Nintendo's unique and involving Action Command system.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Nintendo

What have they done before?
Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door (NGC/100 91%)
Easily one of Gamecube's best RPGs, with beautiful looks and a huge dollop of the ol' funny.







MARIO & LUIGI PARTNERS IN TIME

In a war of worlds, only the brothers can work it out.



Aliens have invaded the Mushroom Kingdom. Not just your usual aliens, mind. These are creepy, purple, laser-happy, mushroom aliens. They've captured the Princess present (who, naturally, was on a day trip to Mushroom Kingdom past) and turned Peach Castle into *Shroob* Castle. And they've got to be stopped!

We're currently a few hours into the adventure and so far we're enjoying it immensely. Controls-wise, it's very similar to the GBA adventure, with each face button allowing you to control the jumping movement of each brother and baby brother independently. Move the two pairs together and the babies will hop onto the backs of their older siblings, allowing you to control all four of them simultaneously. Of course, thanks to the DS's dual screens, it all gets much cleverer than that.

You see, the two pairs can split up, often across both screens, and many of the game's puzzles revolve around manoeuvring each pair on each screen, with actions on the one screen affecting actions on the other. For instance, switches can activate platforms, or special blocks will open up pipes, allowing travel between the two screens.

This quadruple-character system also translates to the battles. As in games like *Saga* and *Paper Mario*, the Action Command system is



△You can choose which specific areas you want to level up in.

△Here the babies have to knock the fire sprites to the Bros on the bottom screen.



△As the babies leg it to the exit, Mario must keep the light turned on so they can see the path ahead.



△Expect plenty of dual-screen puzzles. Here the babies have to open the path ahead with switches.





△Baby Bowser trying to kidnap Baby Peach.This would be funny if it wasn't *so damned sick.*



△Professor E. Gadd makes a comeback – with a time machine!



△Peach's Castle acts as a hub, giving access to each Time Hole.

back in full effect. This involves you having to time button presses to maximise damage potential, and dodge and counter enemy attacks, However, you now have the babies to help, which means you have to time two button presses to deal the most damage. Likewise, some power-ups, such as the green shell, allow you to use the babies and the brothers together to bounce shells back at the opposition, in what can only be described as a four-player game of Koopa Squash.

Admittedly, it takes a little getting used to, but the way the game utilises the dual screens, particularly for the excellent cutscenes and quadruple character system, is very clever indeed. In the few hours we've now spent with the game, we've found ourselves nodding with approval more times than we'd care to mention.

> **"SOME POWER-UPS ALLOW YOU TO USE THE BABIES AND THE BROTHERS TOGETHER"**

NGC VERDICT

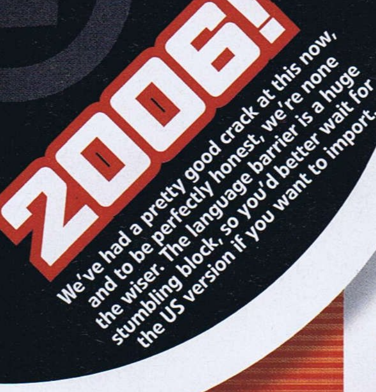
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We really are enjoying this a great deal. The dialogue and humour play a massive part, and there are loads of speech samples, which makes the whole thing play like a surreal pantomime. As yet, though, other than the dual-screen features, we've yet to see the game make use of the DS's other bits of hardware. We're also finding it a tad easy, although we'll leave any criticism for now.

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 3 4 **5**





THE KNOWLEDGE

- Turn-based battles in a series of randomly generated dungeons.
- Collect hundreds of items and Pokémon to gain a tactical advantage in the increasingly difficult battles.
- Link up with the GBA version of the game – although this feature was discovered to have a bug that erases your saved data. Classy.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Chunsoft

What have they done before?
Nothing that's been released in the UK. It's most famous for the *Mysterious Dungeon* series of games, of which this is a Pokémon-ised version.





△ You'll be allocated a partner Pokémon the start of the game.



△ Your party must contain your partner and your main Pokémon.



△ You battle and recruit new Pokémon to your team in the randomly generated dungeons.



△ Let's be honest here – it doesn't look particularly great. No siree.



△ This is the place to find new missions for each dungeon. Shame we can't tell what's going on.

POKÉMON DUNGEON

The creature-collecting classic descends to strange new depths.



We're not quite sure what to make of this. The game begins with a little personality test, where you answer a bunch of questions to determine the kind of Pokémon that will be your main character. You then get assigned a partner Pokémon and you're thrown into the game proper.

Mysterious Dungeon is basically a massive dungeon crawl. From the main town area, you take on missions inside randomly generated dungeons. These usually involve a rescue of some kind, and a means of recruiting new party members. The battles you're up against are turn-based affairs, but rather than being whisked off to a separate battle screen, you trade blows back and forth in a strange approximation of a real-time battle.

It's worth noting that all the Pokémon behave identically to the way they do in other games, with evolution milestones and skill trees, and as you'd expect, your Pokémon has the familiar four-slot move list. However, there's also a wealth of items you can buy or find, and so the game's main element is the tactical battles themselves – making decisions about which Pokémon to use and weighing up the pros and cons of any items in your inventory. Quite enjoyable so far then, if a little bit unusual.

> "YOU TRADE BLOWS BACK AND FORTH IN AN APPROXIMATION OF A REAL-TIME BATTLE"

NGC VERDICT

UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	TBA	OUT NOW



It's hard to judge at the moment, mainly because of the language barrier. In fact, we'd be really hard pushed to recommend that anyone imports it. There are so many items to use that even a trial and error approach to figuring things out is difficult. It's also hard to understand how, when and why the game progresses – so far, we've just found ourselves in relentless dungeon battles in the same area type.

ANTICIPATION RATING



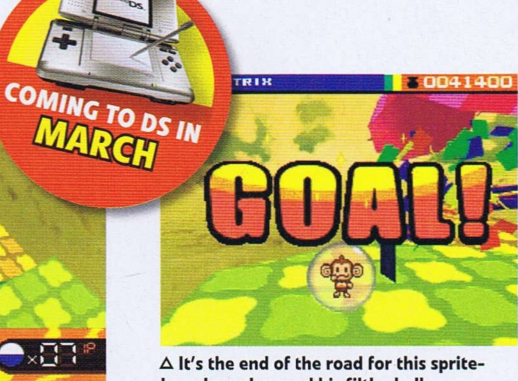



4


coming
soon.



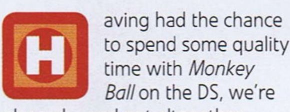




△ It's the end of the road for this sprite-based monkey and his filthy ball.

SUPER MONKEY BALL TOUCH & ROLL

Stroking chimps on DS



Having had the chance to spend some quality time with *Monkey Ball* on the DS, we're pleased – and not altogether surprised – to report that it's looking top notch.

Remarkably little has been sacrificed from the Gamecube versions, although the graphics are a fair bit simpler to keep things running at that essential silky-smooth framerate. Your monkey is now a cartoon sprite rather than a 3D model, but other than that, it's much the same.

The game is controlled by spinning a little ball on the lower screen, which is excellent for making small, precise movements but quite tricky when you just need to speed along in a straight line.

Without any physical reference point for the centre of the ball, we tended to weave from side to side, which is fatal on some of the more convoluted of the game's 50 courses. You can always use the D-Pad, though, which we found to be the safest way to navigate the tracks.

There are six minigames – Race, Fight, Bowling and Golf (the putting version) from the Gamecube, plus a couple of all-new DS specials. Hockey is just like one of those air hockey tables you see in arcades, except you can draw your own paddle using limited monkey ink.

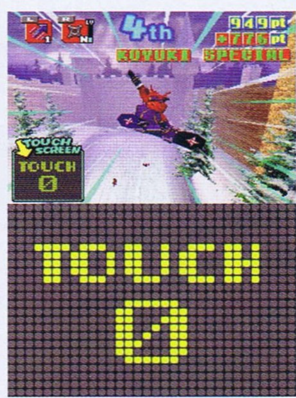
Finally, and most bizarrely, Wars is a first-person shooter in which you roll around a simple maze, shooting bananas at rival monkeys. All of the minigames can be shared with other players, plus you can record replays, save high scores and do pretty much everything you can on the full-size versions. It's out now on import and we'll be reviewing it next issue.



△ Some of the levels are taken from the Gamecube versions, so, erm, watch out.



△ Sweeping curves and fireballs in reserve. Perfect.



△ A predicted score? Hope not!

COMING TO DS IN MARCH

SNOWBOARD KIDS

My word, how you've grown…



Arriving just a little too late for review this issue, *Snowboard Kids* is a DS update of the rather excellent cartoon racing series for N64. Early impressions? Well, the super-deformed riders have been changed into something more realistic and altogether less charming, so there's one major downer already. And they come with a selection of stupid Xtreme Sportz phrases, which are, like, so totally not as gnarly as the developers seem to think they are. Bummer, dudes.

But it's still *Snowboard Kids*, and you can still squash your opponents flat – this time by dropping a weight on them, rather than whacking them with a golden frying pan. Full review next month.



△ Looks like one of those city courses in *SSX*.

COMING TO GC IN MARCH

SONIC RIDERS

Surf's up for hedgehog boy



△ To make Sonic perform a trick, hold the stick in the direction you want to spin. There are probably a few other 'secret' moves to find, but we didn't manage any during our races.



△ Wow, it's Gex's cousin!



△ The excellent starting line thing.



We've seen this described as '*Sonic* meets *SSX*', which is fairly close to the mark, but '*F-Zero* versus *Kirby's Air Ride*' seems a more appropriate combination.

Although it's developed by Sonic Team rather than *F-Zero GX*'s Amusement Vision, we'd be surprised if there hadn't been some form of inter-departmental incest at Sega , because *Sonic Riders* looks incredibly similar to Nintendo's future racer. Which is, of course, a very good thing.

You have to press the joystick forwards to accelerate, and if you fail to steer around a corner, you'll be gently guided through it, which is where the *Kirby* similarity kicks in. Mind you, Kirby didn't move at a zillion miles per hour, pulling stunts and riding turbulence to gain even more speed, and he certainly never got bounced through the top of a jungle canopy and onto the back of a giant centipede, as, rather bewilderingly, happened to Sonic while we were playing.

Our favourite part is right at the beginning of each race, where you have to run backwards a little way and then leg it towards the moving start line, hopefully timing it so you cross at exactly the right moment. Get it wrong and you'll be left behind. Or electrocuted.

After that, it officially becomes The Most Difficult And Confusing Thing Ever, and we got absolutely thrashed by the computer racers every single time. But, strangely, we were left wanting more. Oh, and the thumping techno soundtrack is ear-bleedingly brilliant too.



COMING TO DS IN FEBRUARY

RESIDENT EVIL DEADLY SILENCE

Silent but deadly? It's RE-make 2



Capcom's latest remake of the classic original *Resident Evil* is set to arrive on DS in the 'first half' of next year, so there may be a fair old wait before we're able to find out whether exhuming the decade-old PS1 title is a smart idea.

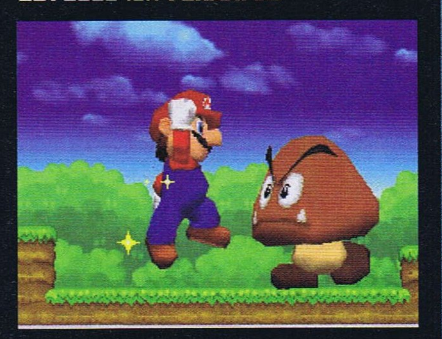
Right now, we're very much looking forward to getting our hands on the brand new Co-op and Battle modes, but a little concerned that the clunky old controls seem, well, clunky and old, especially when compared to the magnificent *Resident Evil 4*.

The ability to stab zombies with a stylus-knife adds something quite different to the game, although the door-opening animations are an unwelcome and possibly unnecessary blast from the past.



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

OUT 2006-ISH **FORMAT** DS



Mario's first 2D platformer since the days of the SNES won't be with us for a while yet, which is a good reason for optimism. All three of his previous 'proper' 2D adventures (*Super Mario Bros*, *SMB3* and *Super Mario World*) launched to universal Best Game Ever acclaim, and although this one is unlikely to repeat the feat in 2006, it's heartening to see that Nintendo won't be treating it as a lightweight *Touch & Go* sort of thing. Prepare for some first-class platform genius. Eventually…

FIFA STREET 2

OUT MARCH **FORMAT** GC



You'll have to wait until early March for another freeform yet strangely robotic kickabout with the off-duty likes of Rooney, Ronaldinho and (not the real) Ronaldo. This won't be the last footy game we'll see in the World Cup year, but it will be the only one where the commentator goes "BOOOYAAA!" when you score with a triple-stepover overhead backheel volley from inside your own penalty area.

HARVEST MOON MAGICAL MELODY

OUT MARCH **FORMAT** GC



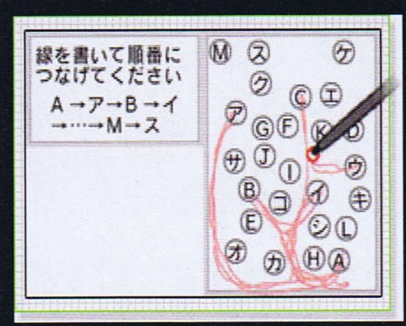
We reviewed the Japanese version, *Song Of Happiness*, back in issue 107, awarding it a massive 85%, despite not being able to understand more than a couple of words of it. So you know that by next March, this somewhat unexpected English version will have us drooling over its earthy charms as only a *Harvest Moon* game can.

It's a throwback to the SNES and N64 eras, which will please anyone who didn't appreciate the prominent dating-sim aspects of *A Wonderful Life* on Gamecube. Here the emphasis is placed firmly on acquiring and developing more land for your farm, hopefully beating your rival in the process.

Four-player party games and cartoon graphics are the order of the day in this game, and there's the option to play as a girl farmer, if you prefer. Here's hoping that the translation job is up to scratch.

BRAIN EXERCISE

OUT MARCH **FORMAT** DS



If you're doubting Nintendo's ability to bring non-gamers to the Revolution, here's a DS title that proves they're not just howling at the moon in Kyoto. *Brain Exercise* isn't so much a game as a mental workout for commuters.

Nintendo bigwig Satoru Shibata said: "If you can't remember what you had for dinner last Wednesday, this is for you." And judging by the sales figures in Japan, where *Brain Exercise* is steadily drifting towards the million-unit mark, the prospect of better thinking through videogames has widespread appeal. Now if only we could remember when the release date is supposed to be…

TAMAGOTCHI

OUT MARCH **FORMAT** DS



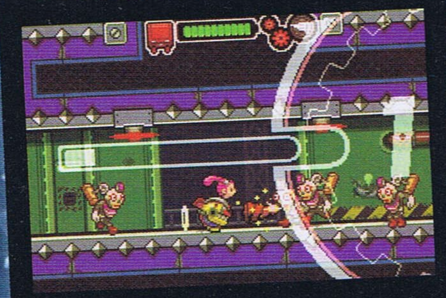
You wouldn't expect a game based on the original egg critter keyring pets from the 1990s to be entirely sane, and *Tamagotchi Connexion Corner Shop* certainly won't disappoint in that respect. Rather than caring for a creature that will be crushed under a pile of its own faeces if you neglect it for a week, this DS effort is all about shops. Yes, shops.

You have to set up a business with your Tamagotchi 'partner' and make it enough of a success to attract the attention of Princess Tamako. After that, we've heard that the game descends into *GTA*-style gangster violence, with yolk all over the place. It comes out in March, this one.



DRILL DOZER

OUT FEBRUARY **FORMAT** GBA



February sees the Western release of the GBA game formerly known as *Screw Breaker*. Thanks to its sensible change of name, we now know that it's all about demolishing things and tunnelling through 2D platform levels, using a 360° rotating drill robot gizmo-type device. And if that's not enough to tunnel your channel, it's from Game Freak, the people behind *Pokémon*, and it's published by the 2D platforming overlords at Nintendo. We predict some pretty serious goodness.

PAC-MAN WORLD 3

OUT FEBRUARY **FORMAT** GC



The Pac is back, and available right now for import-hungry platforming fans – although given the lukewarm reception it received in the US, we can't imagine that many of you have rushed out to buy it.

Anyway, this is much the same as *Pac-Man World 2*, featuring *Mario*-style jumping and butt-slamming, mixed with Pac's traditional dot-munchage. The framerate in the US version can be a bit dodgy at times, but from what we've seen, the levels seem nicely designed, in a 'generic 3D platformer' sort of way. It's out over here at the beginning of February.

ODAMA

OUT MARCH **FORMAT** GC



Military pinball-strategy weirdness from the people who brought us the nightmarishly bizarre talking man-fish simulator *Seaman* for Dreamcast. They tell us it's out at the end of March, but given the many revisions and updates that have happened since we first saw it almost three years ago, we'd be surprised to see it hit that release date. Still, anything's possible, and whenever it eventually turns up, we're 91% certain it's going to be pretty special.

FINAL FANTASY 4

OUT FEBRUARY **FORMAT** GBA



You can't knock a good RPG. Everyone likes to dress up as an elf and knock seven shades of numbers out of a bat's head during yet another random encounter, and here's your chance to do it all over again, with enhanced graphics and an all-new 50-level dungeon.

There are loads of extras to unlock, so this is sure to test the battery endurance of many a GB Micro early next year (in the UK) or right now (on US import)..

DON'T FORGET NOW...

Already reviewed on import and out here next year

SUPER PRINCESS PEACH

Late February sees the UK release of Geraint's all-time favourite game – the pinkest, sugariest, gayest platformer ever. It isn't just for girls and Welshmen, being an inventive little romp in the style of *Wario Land 4*, but you'll need to wear shades if you're going to play it in a public place.



CHIBI ROBO

February is when we'll be able to cop ourselves an English-language version of this beautiful housekeeping robot adventure, which walked away with a thoroughly deserved Star Game award on Japanese import in the summer. Picking up litter and making little girls cry has never been so much fun.



TRAUMA CENTRE

Rumour has it that this surgical simulator is so realistic, it's being used to train the next generation of NHS doctors. And after completing the import version on the Easy level, we feel more than qualified to remove the odd appendix from a passed-out tramp. You can see if it works for you, too, in March.



PHOENIX WRIGHT

Trauma Centre's natural companion piece, this legal eagle of a solicitor simulation puts you right in the middle of a courtroom drama. Having finished it, we're pretty confident that, given the chance, we could even secure a pardon and hefty damages for Saddam. Just give us a call in March and we'll be ready.





NGC 2005 AWARDS...

FIGHTING! BONGOS! ZOMBIES! OUR COUNTDOWN OF THE BEST GAMES OF THE YEAR HAS THEM ALL

Twelve months of gaming have passed, and with them, their fair share of surprises, high points and, erm, *Bubble Bobble Revolution*. So, in time-honoured tradition, we're going to wrap up the year with a quick look back at the games that have give us the most pleasure, in a top ten stylee.

The **NGC** team, along with our regular reviewers and games testers, have voted for our favourite, most memorable games – the games that we've found ourselves going back to time and again. The games that have stuck in our minds as being special in some small way. The games that we've played together, fought over, and have been the topic of discussion months after we first clapped eyes on them.

As is often the case, you aren't going to agree with some of our choices. You can let us know what you think on the last page, and if by some miracle some of these games have slipped you by, we're giving you the chance to win the complete top ten for your efforts. You can't say fairer than that...

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

"IS IT JUST ME OR DO YOUR HANDS *REALLY* HURT..."

The only 'other' reason to own a set of bongos. And what a reason. Sure, it's basically a platformer of sorts, but the fact that you control it by banging (and clapping) away with a pair of plastic drums turns it into something unique. The basic premise is simple: navigate a series of levels and collect as many bananas as you can before facing a boss. It's simple, brash, almost arcade-like fun. Surprisingly, it also ranks as one of the most visually stunning Gamecube games your money can buy.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

It's so tactile. Nothing's more satisfying that hammering away at your bongos to make DK smack the living daylights out of a giant chicken head. You can't beat clap-dodging an incoming punch before delivering a rapid combination of punches, and how can we forget DK brutally machine-gun-headbutting a giant metal egg?

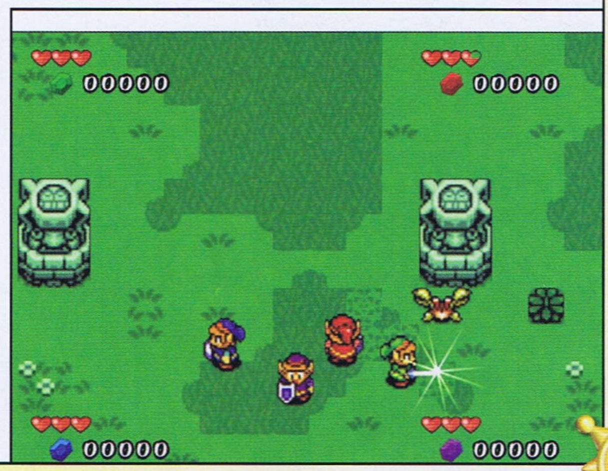
9 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS

"SORRY, I, UM, I FORGOT MY LINK CABLE..."

It's not a 'proper' *Zelda*, and it requires a ludicrous amount of money and three friends to enjoy as Shigsy intended, but with the right ingredients, *Four Swords* truly shines. It's a masterclass in game design, with each stage introducing new items, techniques and concepts. Each puzzle tests your collective mental muscle, and each trial brings out the best and worst in your co-operative, competitive streaks. The only game we've played this year that makes you feel like you're being manipulated by a higher power.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

It's the little things really. How can you forget the first time you used the Fire Rod to torch an entire field of grass in the game's opening stage? Or the first time you threw your mate down a hole, before doing it again and again? And how can you not smirk like an idiot when shower upon shower of sweet, sweet gems tumble down from the sky?



OMG! WTF! AWARD

KILLER 7

This could also qualify for a 'Most Likely To Give You A Headache Award'. The completely insane story, incessant swearing, buckets of gore and rather unsavoury activities make this something of an acquired taste. It also plays unlike anything that's gone before, with its odd mish-mash of on-rails exploration, shooting and obscure puzzle-solving gameplay. One thing is certain though – it's absolutely gorgeous to look at, and the exceptional, climactic ending makes it a gaming experience like no other.

8 MARIO POWER TENNIS



"SPECIAL POWER MOVES – ON OR OFF?"

Surely this doesn't need much in the way of description. It's another perfect marriage between the Mushroom Kingdom and tennis, much like the N64 version but with some extra tweaks and added bonuses. Perhaps the biggest of these are the special power moves that allow you to whack the ball at your opponent with skull-splitting force. Whether you want these turned on or off is down to you, but if there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that there really is something worryingly alluring about Peach and Daisy in those little dresses...

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

Tight pink dresses aside, *Mario Power Tennis*'s greatest triumph is its accessibility. Accessibility that hides oceans of depth for those willing to find it. The result is a hugely competitive multiplayer game that never seems to lose its appeal. That is, unless you're Geraint, who seems to want to smash Martin's teeth in every lunchtime after he inevitably gets beaten in straight sets...

MOST UNDERRATED

SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR

We were actually torn between this and *Mario Baseball* – but seeing Mario's 'doing' sports a little bit too often these day, we thought it best we punish him in some small way. Which leaves us with hacking the bejesus out of the Romans in *Spartan*. Kittsy actually spent more time with this than we feel entirely comfortable with, which is actually quite a recommendation. You see, fighting games – least of all the roaming, button-mashing variety – aren't exactly his thing, yet there he was, wide eyed and grinning, hacking up legions of loin-clothed warriors. "I'm just admiring the tremendous technical achievement it represents," he'd say, while decapitating his 100th victim...

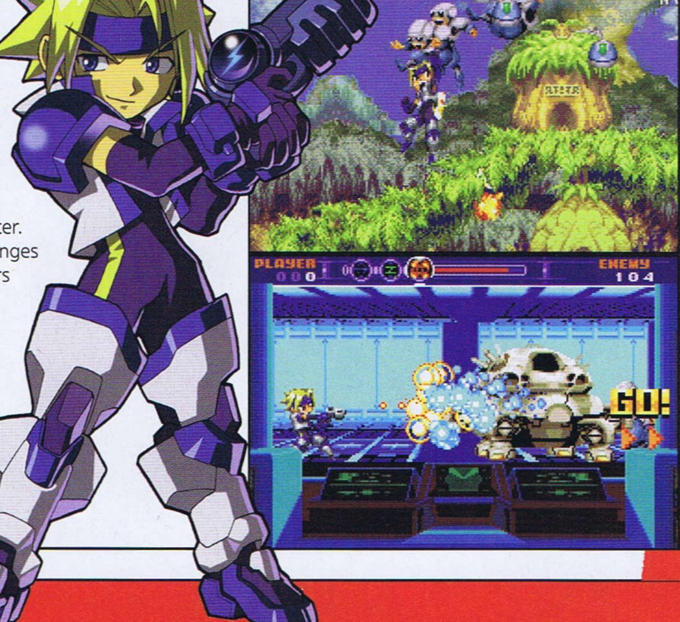
7 GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES

"IT'S THE SPRITIEST, ROTATIEST THING WE'VE EVER SEEN"

A 2D shooter that makes five-year-old technology feel as though it's cutting edge. Three years in the making, Treasure has milked the GBA for every last drop of power, cramming sprite after sprite down your throat until you threaten to choke. It really is a technical marvel, but underneath all the madness lies a superbly crafted shooter. There are more unique and engaging challenges and ideas in one level than most developers manage in a lifetime.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

It's got to be the bosses – there are just so many of them! One in particular really does it for us, though – Seven Force, a metallic monstrosity that morphs into seven different forms as you hurtle through a mine shaft at breakneck speed. Arguably the best boss ever.





BEST MULTIPLAYER

BOMBERMAN DS

While we've wasted hours playing multiplayer *Mario Kart*, the explosive antics of *Bomberman* just beat the portly plumber to the gold medal position. Sure, the single-player mode is unexciting and unsatisfying, but with just one solitary cartridge, you can play with up to eight players. Better yet, the action is expanded over both screens and you have access to everything: power-ups, handicaps, dozens of arenas, game modes, AI bots – the whole shaboodle. It even lets you detonate bombs by shouting into the microphone. Embarrassing, yes, but very nice.



BIGGEST LETDOWN

STARFOX ASSAULT

What did they do? What *did they do*? While the classic Arwing levels showed obvious promise (and sometimes even flair), Namco's unwise decision to make three quarters of the game a ground-based exercise in tedium simply beggared belief, making *Assault* the second *Starfox* misfire on Gamecube. Next time, Nintendo, either hand *Starfox* development duties over to Sega, or just, you know... do it yourselves, eh?



BIGGEST SURPRISE

KIRBY'S POWER PAINTBRUSH

Not that we ever expected it to be bad, as such (although we wouldn't have been surprised if it was), it's just that we never imagined it would be so good. *Paintbrush* is by far and away the best *Kirby* game to have been released in, well, ages. The art style is terrific, the music is perfect, and in some small way it manages to nudge the ancient art of 2D platforming in a new and wonderfully liberating direction. This all adds up to make this the *Kirby* game that we obsess over.



SHORT BUT SWEET

ANOTHER CODE

It was either this or *Yoshi's Touch and Go*, but we decided that the latter was surpassed by *Kirby's Power Paintbrush*, so Ash's Point 'n' Click adventure was the only way to go. Yes, it only lasted us a couple of days, but it included some of the best puzzles we'd ever seen, a lovely, delicate art style, some inspired uses of the DS hardware and it had an atmosphere all of its own. This is one of the shortest adventures we've played recently, but there's no doubt that it's also one of the most memorable.

6 ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE





"MUST... GO... TO... SLEEP..."

You could argue that *Advance Wars DS* is just a disappointing baby-step from the GBA versions. A couple of tweaks here, a few new game modes there, but nothing that really exploits the DS's unique hardware. No blowing on the mic to send enemy units tumbling into the sea. Nothing that really sets it apart from its predecessors. But then, when it's this good, why bother?

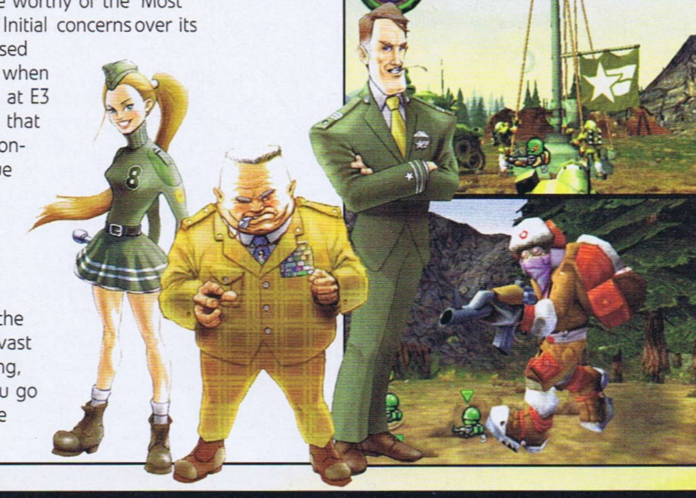
IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

The winning turn-based formula, bright artwork and a barrage of tough, engaging missions makes *Advance Wars* 'officially' humanity's replacement for boring old chess. As Martin puts it, "If somebody spilled superglue in our DS cartridge slot, we wouldn't mind as long as *Dual Strike* was the game stuck there."

5 BATTALION WARS

'WATCH THE GUNSHIPS! WATCH THE GUNSHIPS!'

If ever there was another game worthy of the 'Most Pleasant Surprise' award, then this is it. Initial concerns over its departure from the *Advance Wars* turn-based strategy roots gave way to utter disbelief when we played the (utterly rubbish) early build at E3 a couple of years ago. It's a miracle, then, that it turned out to be a superbly crafted action-strategy game that provided a truly unique and immensely enjoyable experience.



IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

We love the fact it's kept the charm, toy-like atmosphere and tongue-in-cheek humour of its handheld cousins. We love the way it retains the delicate balance of the vast array of unit types. But more than anything, we love the element of choice on how you go about things. Play as a lone soldier or take control of teams – it's up to you.

4 FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE



"HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I RESET THIS MISSION NOW?"

The only decent SRPG for Gamecube – but when it's this good, why do you need any more? Granted, it looks ropey as hell in places, but then *Fire Emblem* has never been about the pretty face – it's about what lurks under the surface. And that's a solid strategy game, crafted with love and a deep understanding of just how to give you both a mental and emotional workout.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE...

The characters, while simply pawns on the battlefield, are fleshed out between stages with beautifully drawn portraits, jaw-dropping cutscenes and extensive dialogue. It's here that the game takes on new meaning. Those badly animated characters become people in your mind, and watching them grow and develop, you begin to grow fond of them...

3 NINTENDOGS









"AHHHHHHH…"

The non-game that says more about the direction Nintendo is heading in than any other game this year. Choose a puppy by its breed and sex, take it home and then, well, play with it. More than any other game, it showcases what the DS is capable of. The touch screen is used to full effect, allowing you to interact and play with your pup, while the DS's mic allows you to train it. Teach it basic commands like sitting and rolling over, or more complex handstands and backflips. It creates a bond between man and machine not seen since the evil woman got attacked by the computer at the end of Superman II.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE…

Nintendo's 'games for everyone' strategy realised to full effect. Present anyone with a copy of the 'game' and they can't be help but be enchanted by it. Young or old, male or female – assuming their hearts aren't made of concrete, they'll be cooing into the mic at a puppy as though it were a newborn baby. It's so inclusive and so accessible that it really challenges the definition of what a game is, or can be.

2 MARIO KART DS

"AARGH! THAT'S SO &£%$^%! CHEAP!"

Mario Kart DS might carry over some of the niggles and dirty cheating tactics of its predecessors, but there's no arguing that this is the most comprehensive *Kart* to date. There's a greater breadth to the track types, from wide open novelty courses to the tighter, purer tracks from the original. The Retro cups are a nostalgic Nintendo love-in, the controls have been tweaked to perfection, making sure you always feel in control, and the amount of single-cart multiplayer content available is more generous than ever. Now this is where lesser companies would call it a day, but not Nintendo – it even delivers a quick, easy and free online service too.





IT'S GREAT BECAUSE…

There's just so much of it! The biggest single-player *Kart* in terms of cups and tracks, and a Mission mode that offers plenty for challenge-perfecting obsessives. And then there's a Multiplayer mode that could conceivably last you longer than any of its predecessors. Eight-player local multiplayer with a group of friends is incredible, but being able to sit in a railway station and play anyone in the world is almost too good to be true. Pinch us.





STRANGELY ADDICTIVE

ZOO KEEPER

Now this is a very strange one. As a puzzler, it's very simple indeed, and to be honest, it doesn't really hide that much depth either. Technically speaking, then, it's a far cry from the likes of *Meteos*. So why it remains one of the most-played DS games in the office is a complete mystery. There's just something insanely hypnotic about it, as though the devil himself had created it, simply to stop us from getting any work done ever again.

IMPORT AWARDS

The games we've really enjoyed this year – but won't make it into the shops over here until 2006…

TRAUMA CENTRE

One of the most intense games you'll ever play, sending your heartbeat soaring and your brow sweating as you try to cope under pressure. It's also the closest any of us at **NGC** are going to get to being surgeons, and judging by some of our performances in this game, that can only be a good thing.

CHIBI ROBO

Honesty, you're *really* going to love this one. You control a tiny little house-cleaning robot (bear with us) and go about your business, not just cleaning up household grime, but helping the family who own you in life and love. It plays like a mini-*Metroid*, with exploration and puzzle solving taking centre stage, and it's one of the sweetest, most charming little games you're ever likely to play.

PHOENIX WRIGHT

All the ups and downs of a courtroom drama and all the hilarious dialogue and cheese of an Australian soap opera, *Phoenix Wright* is something pretty special.



"RELOAD, GODDAMMIT, REEELOOOAAAD!"

This is testament to how much Capcom has really grown this generation. Normally at this time of the year, it's *Zelda* or *Mario* that towers above the competition as the best game on the system, but not so this time around. *Resident Evil 4* is a remarkable achievement in so many ways. Capcom took a tired series, ravaged by its own stubborn insistence on sticking to the tried and tested formula, and completely reinvigorated it.

Immaculate presentation and a change in camera system, along with astounding set-pieces and the most satisfying weapons ever to grace a videogame, combine to make an experience not just worthy of 'Game of the Year', but, arguably, the game of the generation.

IT'S GREAT BECAUSE…

There are just so many golden moments to choose from. There's the shootout with Luis, crippling Ganados with a well-placed shot to the kneecaps, staring up Ashley's skirt with the scope of your sniper rifle… the choices are endless. However, one thing that really sticks in our memory is the phenomenal opening. The whole village section is a stroke of genius – the tense atmosphere capped off by your first encounter with 'Ol' Bag Head', the first time you hacked away at a screaming woman on the ground with your knife, or roasted a cow with an incendiary grenade…

And even better than all that? When the villagers down tools as the bell tolls and the *Resident Evil 4* logo appears, signalling the true beginning of the game. Now that's what we call a intro!

CAST YOUR VOTES! YOUR CHANCE TO WIN!

It's just like the Oscars! But without all the make-up. And crying...

Okay folks, you know the drill. Below are a number of categories for you to fill in. Simply write in the name of the game or hardware – whatever you feel is deserving of the award – making sure that your nomination actually came out in 2005. You'll be surprised how many people have trouble figuring out which year it actually is. Once you've filled out the form in its entirety, cut the page out (you can copy it if you want) and send it in to the following address: THE NGC 2005 Awards, NGC Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Alternatively, you can email ngc@futurenet.co.uk.

The closing date for entries is 18th January 2006, and every entry we receive will go into the Big Hat o' Compos, before one is pulled out and declared the winner. And your prize? The top ten games you've just seen over the last five pages. Now get to it!

YOUR VOTING FORM

GAME OF THE YEAR:

GC GAME OF THE YEAR:

DS GAME OF THE YEAR:

GBA GAME OF THE YEAR:

BEST ADVENTURE:

BEST MULTIPLAYER:

BEST SPORTS GAME:

BEST ACTION GAME:

BEST LICENCE:

BEST GRAPHICS:

BEST SOUND:

BEST IMPORT:

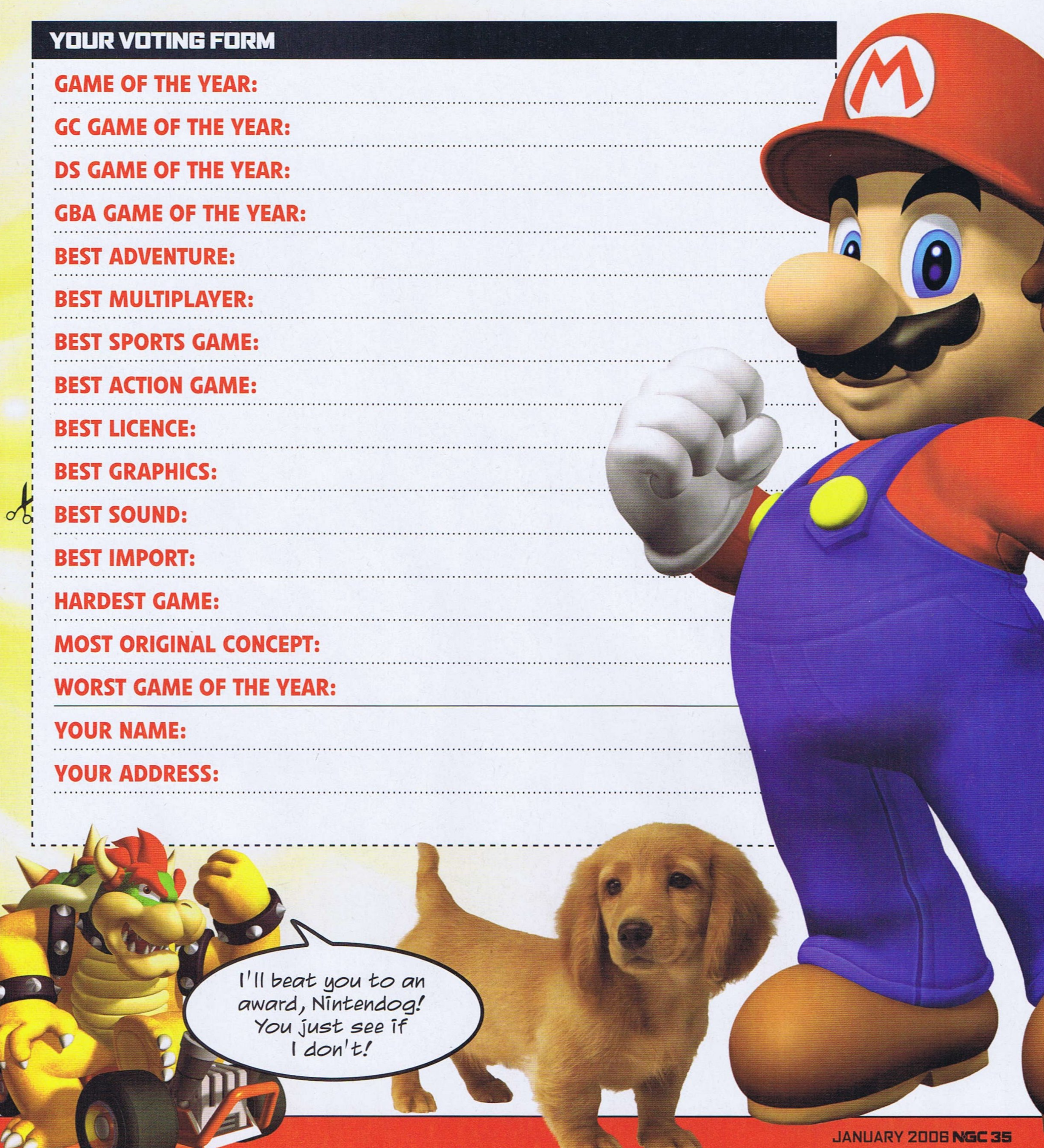
HARDEST GAME:

MOST ORIGINAL CONCEPT:

WORST GAME OF THE YEAR:

YOUR NAME:

YOUR ADDRESS:




JETIX
If you like these...
SPACE PATROL DELTA
LOOK!
ISSUE#17 STARRING...
RANGERS
DR EGGMAN
SKELETON KING
MARTIN
HARRY POTTER
SONIC X
SPIDER-MAN
WE GO 'NANAS FOR NARNIA INSIDE!
100% Official!
JETIX
magazine
WIN!
TV & DVDs!
Games!
NARNIA
...then you need this!
4 SUPER HERO SHOWS!
JETIX PRESENTS
1 SPIDER-MAN
2 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
THE INCREDIBLE HULK 3
4 X-MEN
JETIX
istmas
aos!
FREAKY FESTIVE FUN INSIDE!
HAPPY CHRISTMAS
Posters!
Comic Strip!
POWER RANGERS
FREE
DVD VIDEO
Over 90 minutes of Super Hero action!
PLUS!
FREE
ZAP!
Games Mag!
ISSUE 17 ON SALE NOW!

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS



ANIMAL CROSSING WILD WORLD

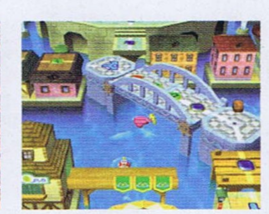
Nintendo's communicate and trade-em-up finds it's rightfull home on Nintendo's handheld? Now with added onlineability! P44

MARIO PARTY 7

Just one party too far? You too will come to know fear as we have... P42







PLUS!

FIFA 06 DS

The beautiful game on DS. Is it a match made in heaven? P44

TRUE CRIME: NYC

Activision's free roaming crime-a-thon in the city that never sleeps. P46

TOUCH GOLF

Nintendo try their hand at the more serious side of sport - and it works. P50

PRINCE OF PERSIA TWO THRONES

Capcom's most insane battler comes to the small screen. Impressive. P54

VIEWTIFUL JOE DOUBLE TROUBLE

Capcom's most insane battler comes to the small screen. Impressive. P60

TONY HAWK'S SK8LAND

The second of the DS' WiFi enabled games provides a pleasant surprise. P66

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24 Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49 A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74 Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89 Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+ Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

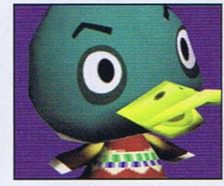
The sub-human entities that make up the NGC reviews team...



TOM E
Proud, fearless - master of all he surveys. None of which could be used to describe our Tom. 'Meow - er, GRRR?!' He whimpered.



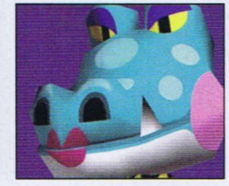
MARTIN
'Hog flesh smouldering under an open bonfire' sang Kittsy for most of the month. 'I hate hose prickly little buggers' he added.



GERAINT
'A duck goes to a chemist and says 'lip-salve, please - and put it on my bill - he HEH!' Oh shut up or get get out will you Evans...



GREENER
What the hell is that supposed to be? How can I think of something funny if I don't know what it is? You people make m sick...'



JOEL
'Arrrrgh - I had this horrible dream that I'd come to work in a dress, my face covered in lippy... this IS a dream right?' Um, no?



ALEX
'...That's Mr Alex to you. I am a boy, honest. You only need to see my hairline for proof. Or you could unbutton... snip

"An effortlessly stylish game"

NGC STAR GAME

△ The seasons change beautifully from the green of spring to autumnal brown.

△ If you want to keep your villagers happy, you'll need to keep things clean.

△ Nook's store still expands as you spend more money and pay off your mortgage.

△ You can navigate fully with the stylus, but some more fiddly tasks, like watering flowers, are easier to handle with the D-Pad controls. These work exactly the same way as they did on GC.

ANIMAL CROSSING WILD WORLD

Staying in is the new going out, thanks to online play



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	MARCH 24
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	YES
MIC	NO
COST	$35 (£21)



Remember when you first heard about *Animal Crossing*? Remember when Miyamoto promised that you'd still be playing it in 30 years? You probably thought: "30 years? But by then we'll all be playing games on strange touch-sensitive devices that respond to your voice and connect invisibly to a global gaming network where we're known only by a number. And instead of ice cream, we'll have cookie-dough-flavoured nano implants!" And you were right, of course. Just 25 odd years out.

But if the DS looks a lot like the future of gaming, *Animal Crossing* looks a lot like its past. In fact, it looks close to identical to the Gamecube version, which in turn looked a lot like the Japan-only N64 version. That's no bad thing, of course. *Animal Crossing* was always an effortlessly stylish game – chunky and cute, but solid and atmospheric. Those looks translate really well to the DS's screen (which knows a bit about being chunky and solid), meaning that your village is still a delightful place to be, studded with red apples and sky-blue ponds, and populated by extraordinarily dressed animals.

IT'S UP TO YOU TO FILL YOUR DAYS: DIGGING FOR FOSSILS, KITTING OUT YOUR NEW HOME

So that's the surface. As far as the question of how much it's like the original game, the answer is that if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck then it's probably a duck. Although, this being *Animal Crossing*, that duck will be called Twingo, he'll finish every sentence by saying "Zooooooot!" and he'll



YOU GOT THE STYLE

In the Gamecube version, you were limited to getting new shirts and patterns. In Wild World, there's everything from hats and helmets to goggles and glasses, as well as the chance to change your hairstyle with the season.





Δ **Objects are just as detailed – and just as odd – as they were in the original. The Happy Room Academy will still be watching over your every decorating decision, so make sure you take your time planning your look.**



Δ **Everything that's in the game – including a little fishing – can be controlled using only the stylus.**





live in a house full of toilets and chess pieces. But what this means is that you're already familiar with the backbone of this game.

You first arrive, completely penniless, in your new town and must throw yourself on the mercy of mercenary shop-keep Tom Nook, who provides you with a house in return for an enormous mortgage. And that's it, as far as the plot goes. From then on, it's up to you to fill your days as you like: scavenging for shells, digging for fossils, testing your patience with a fishing rod and kitting out your new home.

By tying the passage of time in the game to your DS's internal clock, it creates an experience that



SPEED UP

The village is smaller and key locations are much closer together, so you don't waste time running to and fro. It's easier to find the villagers too, and the landscape is curved, as if it was stretched around a globe, so it's easier for you to see into the distance.

can't be rushed. If it's night-time out there, then it's night-time in *Animal Crossing*, and you'll just have to wait till morning for the sun to rise and the shops to open.

The original game was close to perfect, despite its odd premise, and its devoted players really only had two main complaints. The first was the frustration of real life getting in the way. It could be infuriating to be stuck in the supermarket queue when you should have been home, jamming with K.K. Slider. And for a game that was so much about communication and co-operation, it was frustrating that so much of it was cumbersome – swapping item codes on the internet and hauling your precious memory card round to a friend's house wasn't the most convenient kind of multiplayer. But with *Wild World* comes the DS's ability to solve both of those problems. Now you can take your village wherever you go, and pop in for a quick bout of T-shirt designing or insect collecting at the drop of a hat. And the combination of local wireless and WFC connection means that you can visit your friends without

"The perfect comedown after vicious *Mario Kart* battles"



Δ Special events are still the most exciting part of the calendar.



Δ You'll need to listen out for some of the smaller but noisier insects.



Δ Some of the game's characters seem to be in a permanently bad mood.



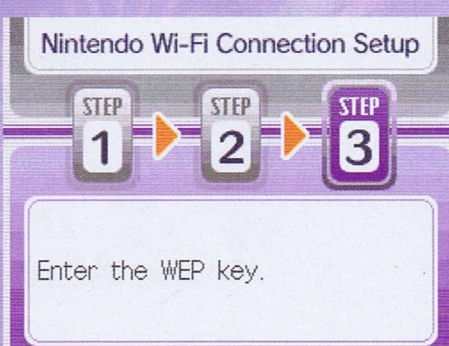
Δ You can buy new umbrellas, or just swap the pattern with one of your own.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Playing online with friends adds a new dimension…



To go online, you'll have to alert Boomer and Copper in the village gatehouse that you intend to take a trip.



If you haven't got your WFC settings sorted, you'll return to the main WFC menu to configure and test your connection.



Once you've travelled to a friend's village, you can talk to each other in speech bubbles. Rude words are blanked out.



As well as pilfering fruit and chatting up new villagers, you can work together or chat while you wait for a fish.

having to leave your chair, let alone your house.

But do these two advantages make up for the fact that *Wild World* is really just a pocket-sized version of a game you've played before? The first is definitely a blessing. Although getting up an hour early to gather mushrooms was an exciting novelty, it's a welcome alternative to be able to do it at the bus stop or in a sneaky break from work. And the second is fantastically enjoyable. On a very basic level, *Wild World* has a 'Tag' mode that works like *Nintendogs*' 'Bark' mode, letting you leave a message in a bottle for any passing player who's also looking to make contact. The next step up is local wireless connection, streamlining the process of getting a friend to help out as you establish your fruit farm. Full WFC connection, which allows four friends (who need to know each other's friend code in advance) to hang out together in the same village is the real draw.

Communication happens via the letter-writing interface (now slick and speedy thanks to the stylus) and appears as little speech bubbles in the top screen. You can fish together, send letters to local villagers and even wreak a little havoc in your friend's peaceful hamlet – if you're willing to risk a brisk boot up the backside from your host. The only real disappointment is that you can't send letters to your friends when they're offline. It's by no means

> **"YOU CAN FISH TOGETHER, SEND LETTERS AND EVEN WREAK A LITTLE HAVOC..."**

The only place where paying your mortgage is fun



△ If you want to share the town with other players, then instead of having your own houses, you'll all sleep in the attic of one big house. Try not to fight over the choice of wallpaper.

WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?

This version of the game boasts a host of new and improved features, while a lot of the old favourites that made the Gamecube version so good are still there too.



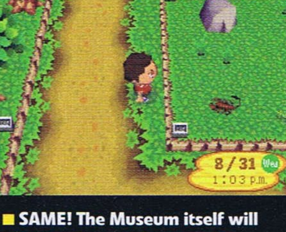
■ **NEW! Arrive in a taxi, driven by Kapp'n, complete with seedy chat-up lines if you're a girl.**



■ **SAME! Sow Joan's turnip market is still the best way to earn big bucks fast.**



■ **NEW! You'll still be digging for fossils, but now Blathers can identify them himself.**



■ **SAME! The Museum itself will look familiar, with rooms for insects, fish, paintings and fossils.**



■ **NEW! The night sky is full of stars waiting to be drawn into constellations for you to name.**



■ **SAME! Writing letters is still a huge part of the game, but it's quicker thanks to stylus input.**



■ **NEW! Villagers will visit when you're in your house, so expect your decor to be talked about.**



■ **SAME! You still search for carp and sea bass, but fish, insects and fossils are far more plentiful.**

a thrilling experience, but it's the perfect comedown after some vicious *Mario Kart* battles, and it changes the whole atmosphere of the game.

While the rest of the game looks the same and behaves the same, there are all sorts of new delights to discover. The new items are just as lovingly designed and named as the many originals that you can still find or buy. Villagers can now talk to each other as well as to you, involving you in their feuds and flirtations in a way that lives up to the original's stellar reputation for hilarious dialogue. You can even meet up with them in a new coffee shop (tucked away in the Museum's basement), which also doubles as K.K. Slider's new venue. As you start to play, the differences don't seem very important, but as the days go by, you realise that it's a richer, more rewarding world, better geared for playing on the go and in short bursts. And would you really want Nintendo to have changed something that was so finely judged in the first place? Will it last you the next 30 years? Probably not. Will it make you very, very happy? We'll let Twingo answer that: "Zoooooot!"

MARGARET ROBERTSON



PATTERNS

The Pattern Maker is virtually the same, but your designs can now be applied to a wider range of objects. They can be used as tiles in your village, meaning you can create huge mosaics. These can be spread to other villages if you take the game online.



■ You can all hang out together.
■ It's easier to get rich.
■ There's more to do.

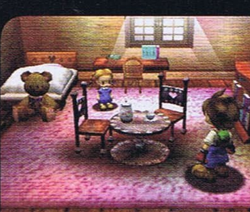


■ It's the same game.
■ The top screen is dull.
■ You can't write to your friends.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Harvest Moon: It's a Wonderful Life
Ubisoft
NGC/91 91%
The same lovely atmosphere, with twice as much work.



7 VISUALS

Familiar and charming. It's just a shame about the top screen.

8 SOUNDS

Fewer tunes, but still catchy without being annoying.



9 MASTERY

Local and online connections work very smoothly.



10 LIFESPAN

Did we mention the 30 years thing? You'll be playing this for ages...

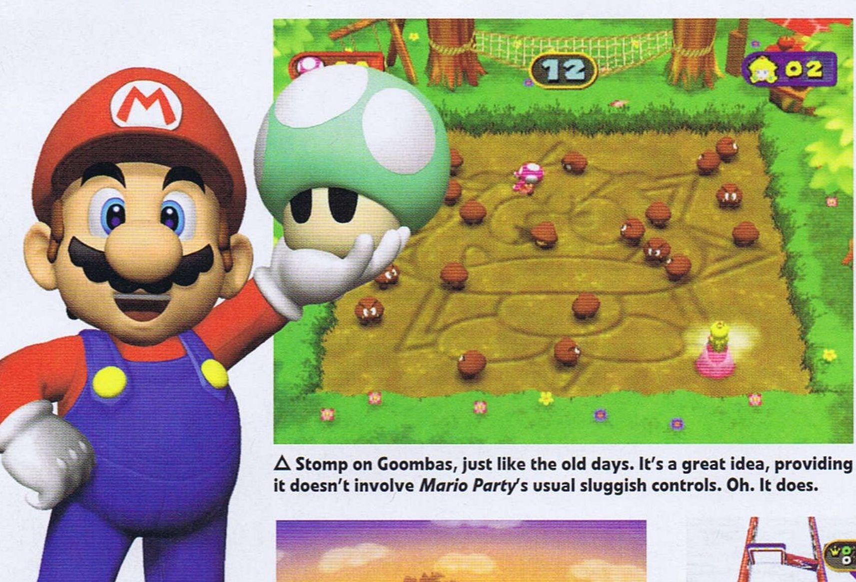
VERDICT

It's *Animal Crossing* all over again, only this time there's online play too. What could be more wonderful?

NGC 92



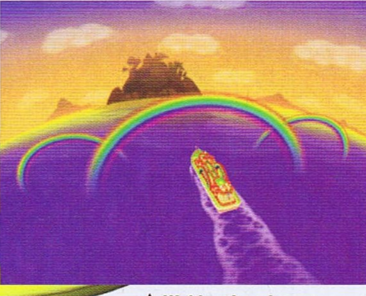
"Little more than a half-arsed and cynical retread"



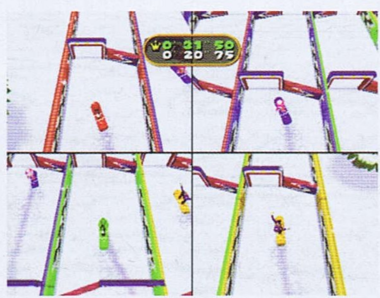
△ Stomp on Goombas, just like the old days. It's a great idea, providing it doesn't involve *Mario Party*'s usual sluggish controls. Oh. It does.



△ This is your only reward for hours spent battling *Mario Party* monotony: a small, rotatable statue of a fish. Worst. Party. Ever.



△ We'd rather drown.



△ Split-screen games decrease the party feel.

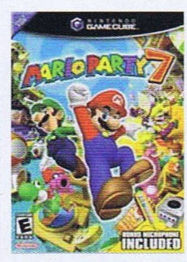


△ Retro Nintendo still makes us all smiles.



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	HUDSON
RELEASE DATE	JANUARY
PLAYERS	1-8
MEM. CARD PAGES	6
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



MARIO PARTY 7

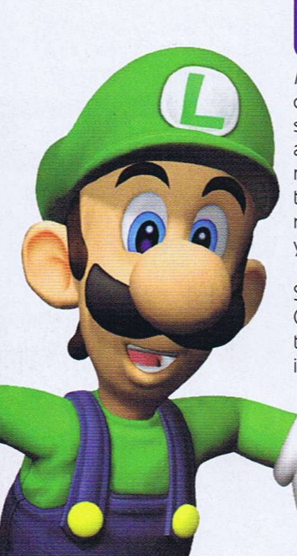
Anyone still having fun?

Oh, please, not *again*. There's aren't many cash cows as big, fat and ugly as the *Mario Party* franchise, and Hudson just can't help returning to contentedly suck at its udders, year after year after year. But if you're expecting number seven to be little more than a half-arsed and cynical retread of previous parties… well, you're dead right.

You must know the drill by now: Six Exciting Game Boards, 70-or-so Crazy Multiplayer Minigames… this is as close to *Mario Party 6* as it's possible to get without Hudson falling foul of the cloning laws. This year's party is hosted by Toadsworth, whose jingoistic English 'accent' ("Top hole! Eh, wot? That DK is a fine bloke!") sums up the game's ignorant, bored translation. But at least his grating idiocy is offset by a welcome swelling of the party crowd: Birdo, Dry Bones and the lovely Toadette are all new as playable characters.

Like previous instalments, *Mario Party 7*s main goal in life is to take things slow. This is the seventh game and you *still* have to watch the computer players trudge around the game board and spend a full minute faffing about on event squares. The wait's easier to take with friends, of course, but the random-o-meter is now so far off the scale – Bowser shakes things up every five turns; Duel Games sometimes reward the winner with nothing at all – that the idea of just flipping a coin for an hour starts to look very appealing.

And the minigames? Hudson's brains entered permanent hibernation some time around *Mario Party 4*. There *are* moments of genius, like the Battle game where you hide from hammer-whacking moles, and the 2-vs-2 plank-guiding game that has tense 'to me, to you' action to make even the Chuckle Brothers



MARIO'S MINIGAMES

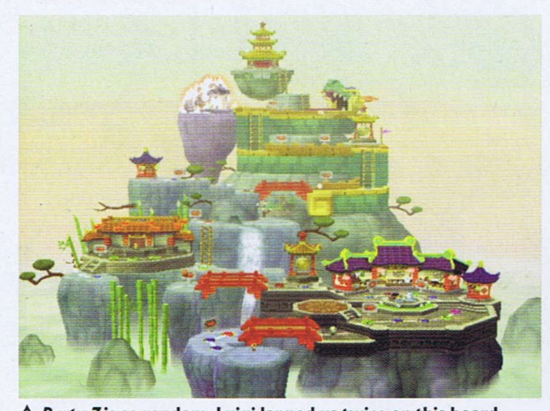
All the party games, from ravishing to rubbish.


The very good: Pogo-a-go-go involves one player spinning the platform while the others bounce to avoid the gaps. Brilliant nonsense.


The good: The straight Super Sprint karter that Mario Party's been crying out for since 1999. It's so fast, you'll… actually it's not that fast at all.


The bad: Magmagical journey is a thrilling test of whether you can jump. Fall off and you just have to sit and wait for the others to finish.


The very bad: Donkey Kong's 'special' minigames are all awful. This one involves guessing which bridge is broken. Four times.


Δ *Party 7* is so random, Luigi lapped us twice on this board before we'd even managed to get to the top. What fun!





lose it. But too many of the games involve straight races, or falling off platforms, or dodging things fired at you by other players. Seriously: a barely controllable punch-up inside a big floating bubble? We've honestly had more interesting stuff come out of our belly button.

The microphone-compatible games are back too, with the horribly cheap bit of voice-sensitive plastic packed into the box again. There's the option to 'enjoy' the (very few) mic-related games with the joypad, which is a massive relief, because playing 'Guess The Fruit' with Toadsworth by yelling "Banana!" into a microphone is hardly the stuff of legend. Four-player microphone minigames are frustrating, tedious affairs – a bit of Mario Karaoke would have brought things to life, but the most you can hope for is the screaming of words.

If you want your *Mario Party 7* to really go with a swing, your best bet is the 'Special Cruise', where up to eight players take turns manoeuvring around the game board, but joypad-share for the minigames, leading to all kinds of living-room-rocking arguments. Otherwise, *Mario Party* seems happy in its rut, the older cousin of *Wario Ware*, where unlocking the actual fun takes weeks and your only reward is a static polygon model of a T-shirt.

No doubt Hudson is cooking up ways to use the Revolution control sticks for a next-gen party, but you don't need to hack into their office webcam to know that *Mario Party 8* will feature Six Exciting Game Boards, 70-or-so Crazy Multiplayer Minigames, and just as much fun as there is to be had in this edition. Which is almost none.

MARK GREEN

> **"WE'VE HONESTLY HAD MORE INTERESTING STUFF COME OUT OF OUR BELLY BUTTON"**



BAN SOLO

The one-player 'Solo Cruise' strips all the fun out of Party 7 by getting rid of the minigames. And because there's a fixed aim on each board, you're at the total mercy of the dice. You can happily wander around in circles for 45 minutes and still lose just because you threw a bad number. Aargh!



- Some decent games.
- Good with friends – if you don't already own *6, 5, 4, 3, 2* or *1…*



- Slow
- Boring
- Repetitive
- For the *seventh* time



Wario Ware Inc: Mega Party Game$
Nintendo
NGC/97 90%
Half the price and at least 7,000 times the fun.



4 VISUALS

The pitifully repetitive stop-start animation really annoys us.



"Wahoo!", "Peachy!", "Roar!", and the rest. Thrilling stuff.



Seven games in seven years, and still the same old problems.



You can knock five off if your friends aren't interested in partying.

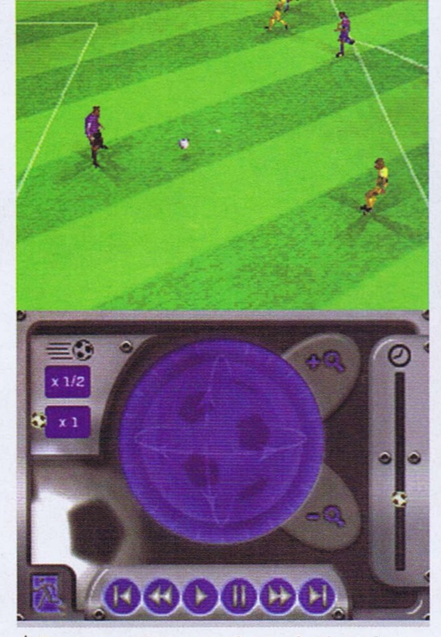
VERDICT

Buy *Mario Party 5*. Buy a Nintendo 64 and *Mario Party 2*. Send the message to Nintendo: *enough!*

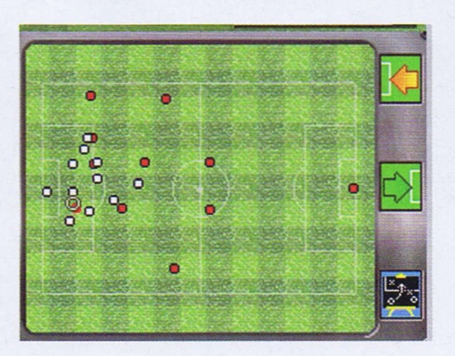


55

"The only major problem is that it's ugly"


△ You can watch replays of your classic goals.


△ We promise that the keepers *do* actually dive.




△ You'll find scoring very simple.

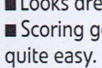

△ You won't use the radar much.



- Better than the Gamecube version.
- End-to-end action.
- Motty's audio.



- Looks dreadful
- Scoring goals is quite easy.
- Too many offsides.





IF YOU LIKE THIS...

FIFA '05
EA
NGC/100 84%
A basic but decent enough attempt at 3D *FIFA* on Game Boy Advance.





5 VISUALS
It's not much of a looker – could do a lot better.

7 SOUNDS
You get Motty's commentary and a decent soundtrack.



5 MASTERY
You can select your substitutes using the stylus.



9 LIFESPAN
There are loads of challenges and leagues to play.

VERDICT
It looks really poor, but thanks to the fast, fluid action, this version is an improvement over *FIFA '06* on Gamecube.

NGC 75

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



FIFA '06

The best football game on DS. Hang on…

We knew something was wrong on our first go when Norwich beat Crystal Palace 9-0. That's when we realised we were playing on Beginner. It has to be the easiest 'easy' mode ever! You can forget about Professional too – you'll only get a challenge on World Class mode. Then, unbelievably, *FIFA '06* proves itself to be better than its big brother on Gamecube.

The GC version was so slow that even Thierry Henry struggled for pace, but here not all the players are the same. Play as Northern Ireland and you'll be trudging around slower than a Sunday League striker with a 10-pint hangover, but choose England and players like Owen and Rooney will race away from defenders.

"YOU'LL NEED TO PLAY SOME NEAT ONE-TOUCH STUFF..."

The passing is pretty fluid too, and seeing as it's too tough to score from distance, you'll need to play some neat one-touch stuff to create good chances. Once in the area, the shooting is okay, but you'll find yourself scoring many remarkably similar goals.

The only major problem is that it's ugly. Sure, it's on DS, but you only have to look at *Mario Kart DS* to see that games can reach N64-standards of visuals. Here players look blocky, and when you're playing in snowy weather, it looks like your DS has interference.

Aside from that, everything from the Team Management mode (minus transfers) to the soundtrack has been crammed into this version. Chuck in a bit of single-cart download multiplayer and you've got a decent handheld footy game.

TOM EAST









△ These bits are ten times easier when you're playing with a human chum.





△ Bonus marks for the camp run…



△ This is Frozone's absolutely useless 'super' move.

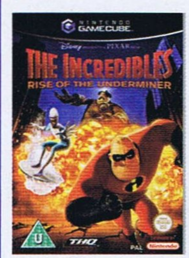
THE INCREDIBLES RISE OF THE UNDERMINER

We'd have preferred to see Bomb Voyage, but still…



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	HEAVY IRON
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30





Pixar hasn't made a sequel to *The Incredibles* yet, but *Rise Of The Underminer* picks up right where the film left off – well, sort of. Although you're treated to a quick CG clip of the whole family squaring up to megalomaniacal mole-man The Underminer, that's the last you'll see of everyone except for Mr Incredible for quite a while. Dash, Violet and Elastigirl have all been ditched, with Frozone drafted in to take their place. The trade-off is that they both fight together, teaming up for some moments of real cleverness. Early villains, for example, sling slimebombs at our heroes, but Frozone can simply freeze them, allowing Mr Incredible to lob them back. In other spots, Mr Incredible yanks up doors while Frozone freezes the machinery inside, or Frozone freezes robots that otherwise can't be smashed.

"THOUGH IT NEVER MATCHES THE EXCITEMENT OF THE FILM, IT'S PLEASINGLY ANIMATED"

Though it never quite matches the excitement of the film, it's pleasingly animated and cleverly done. There's some pretty decent Disney-esque banter between the two, and your AI sidekick is actually fairly intelligent, with some basic commands available.

In fact, the co-operative play's so central to the game that it causes the only real problem – characters carry on chatting away even after they've fallen off a cliff or been beaten to a pulp. It's almost impossible to actually lose – if one character takes a kicking, they'll regenerate in less than 20 seconds, so all you need to do is not die in the interval. This means there's virtually no challenge – but there's also no frustration or hassle.

While we wouldn't recommend buying this, as a way of keeping youngsters quiet for a weekend, it's got to beat sitting through the film for the 300th time…

JOEL SNAPE



- Good fun with two players.
- Nicely animated.
- Good soundalikes.



- It's only four hours long…
- …and it's almost all set underground.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Ultimate Spider-Man
Acclaim
NGC/113 70%
More two-hero action, only this time one of the 'heroes' is a slobbering purple monster.



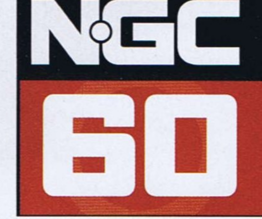
6 VISUALS
Lovely animation, although the detail isn't too inspiring.

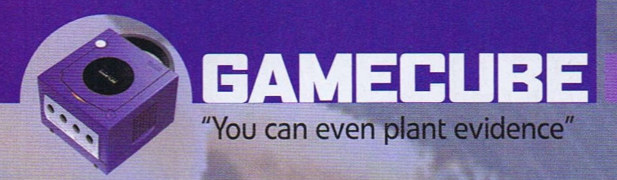
7 SOUNDS
It really does sound like John Goodman and Samuel L Jackson.

5 MASTERY
Nothing that pushes the GC, although there's plenty to do.

4 LIFESPAN
You can probably complete it without dying once.

VERDICT
Gentle, fun and almost impossible to dislike. It'll keep even the most devilish baby happy for a few hours.






"You can even plant evidence"

DEAD ODD

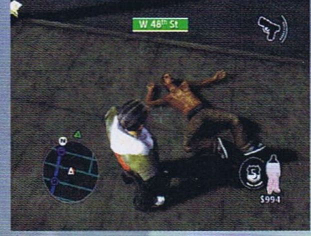
The strange thing about the start of the game is that you're chucked right into an exhilarating shootout in snow-covered backstreets and dumpy crackhouses... and then, after you've already figured out all the buttons, the game forces you to endure a Training mode, which lasts far too long. Utterly bizarre.







△ Melée combat can lead to special moves opening up.



△ Another street, another punk. Marcus deals with scum.



△ Side missions pop up constantly – here we've arrested a counterfeiter.



△ Even though you're a cop, you can nick any car you fancy. Nasty.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	LUXOFLUX
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	21
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40

TRUE CRIME NEW YORK CITY

More streets to clean. And not with a brush.



The good news? *True Crime 2* is an improvement on its predecessor, balancing a huge city, a decent mission structure and enough side quests to make freeroaming work. The bad news? It still isn't even close to matching the ingenuity of *GTA*.

Of course, that's more of a problem on rival formats. On Gamecube, we're still waiting for Rockstar to grace us with its presence, so at the moment, a decent stab at a *GTA* clone is as good as getting *GTA* itself. Unless you happen to have played *GTA* at some point, in which case you'll see this for what it is – flawed, silly and samey, but fun.

The city itself is *almost* an amazing technical achievement. It's huge – it takes as much as 15 minutes to drive from one end to the other, there's a huge variety of indoor sections and the streets team with life.

Being a cop in the Big Apple also adds a further touch: you can frisk people, arrest them and you can even plant evidence. It's a small touch, but it adds a gameplay variant that *GTA* can't, and combined with the vast amount of side quests that get radioed to you (burglaries, domestics, murders, even bum fights – they're all here), it gives you plenty to see and do as you drive between the main missions.

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO NEW YORK

It's not all about smashing in a pimp's face. Well, actually, it is.



Side quests like these involve you hunting down thieves, serial rapists and other types of scum. This guy's a money launderer.



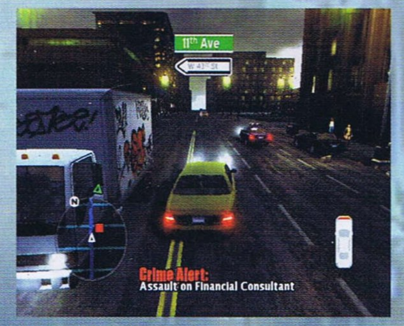
Here we've accrued Bad Cop points by shooting first and asking questions later. That question being: "I wonder how many bullets I used up?"



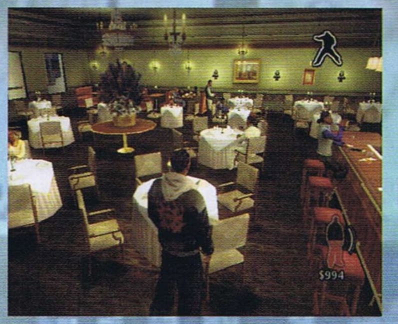
The map is so huge that you'll need to get the subway or a taxi to the furthest parts of the city. Here we're taking the subway to Harlem.



On a mission or side quest, you can fire a warning shot into the air to get the attention of the crims you've come to sort out. Then it's shootin' time!



Δ Heading down south, the streets suddenly get a bit grimmer. Still plenty of perps, mind.



Δ Marcus isn't much of a restaurant critic, but if someone needs a beating, he's there.



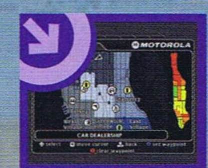
Δ You can switch to this mode to make targeting easier – now just 'pop' the trigger.

There's one slight flaw to the plan, though. On paper, the idea of recreating the world's most iconic city is brilliant. In practice, driving around NYC is the most repetitive experience you can imagine. If it's not long stretches of road like Broadway or Lexington, it's right-angled turns onto one-way streets. Only when you head to the southern tip, or across Central Park, does the game feel like it's throwing something new into the mix. Suddenly you understand why Rockstar invented San Andreas and Vice City.

Unfortunately, the interior sections suffer the same problem. It only takes a few minutes of freeroaming to discover that they're based on four or five templates. Every club looks the same, every store looks the same, and soon the missions go the same way too. In all, there are only two or three that don't require you to drive somewhere, mow down a few heavies and then interrogate a suspect using the game's Stress Level system.

It's to the game's credit, then, that it manages to cope with these problems and come out the other end with something playable. If you accept that *True Crime* is going to niggly, repetitive and predictable, then you'll find yourself moderately entertained. You don't ever feel like you're part of a living, breathing city like you do in *GTA*, but Luxoflux has got closer with its jaunt to NYC than it did with LA.

TIM WEAVER



BE SERIOUS

One of the key differences between this and GTA is the lack of laughs. Despite the violence, Rockstar's game has its tongue firmly in cheek. Here, it's all serious homeboy nonsense with swearing and guns… and it's sponsored by Motorola too.

> **"THE CITY IS HUGE – IT TAKES UP TO 15 MINUTES TO DRIVE FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER"**



- Awesomely huge city.
- Varied side quests.
- Great voice acting.
- Better than *True Crime*.



- Repetitive missions.
- Repetitive interiors.
- Silly, clichéd storyline.
- Some technical faults.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

King Kong
Ubisoft
NGC/114 79%
A good way to spend an afternoon in New York. *With a massive ape!*





6 VISUALS
Great in places, but some bad fogging and camera stickage.



8 SOUNDS
A hip-hop-centric soundtrack, but some top voice acting.

7 MASTERY
The city is impressive; it just needed more time spent on it.



7 LIFESPAN
The missions are short, but freeroaming offers unlimited play.

VERDICT

It's inherently flawed and well short of *GTA*'s quality and invention, but *New York City* is still ambitious and fun.

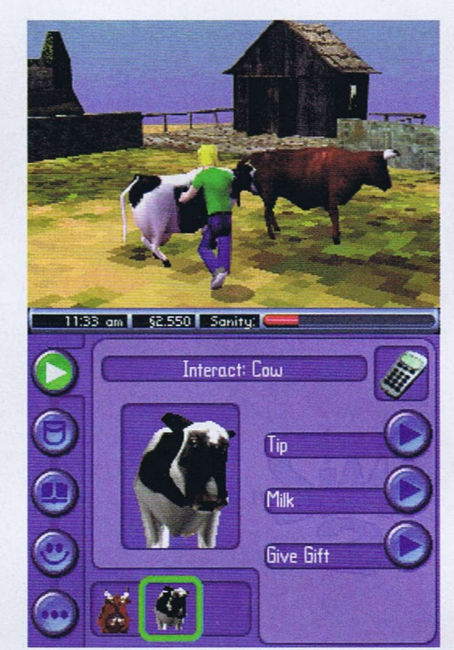


"We can't cuddle up in bed with another Sim"





△ Conversations are scissors-paper-stone affairs.



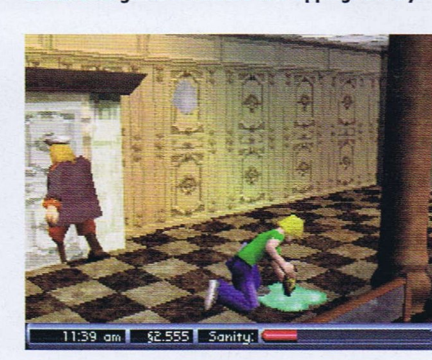
△ The first game to feature cow tipping? Surely.



△ This is a brilliant extra. You can even record your own samples.



△ That arcade machine *will* be ours.





- Clever spin-off.
- Multitudes of minigames to play.
- Decent use of DS.



- There's a limited amount to do.
- You'll actually miss proper *Sims* play.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

ANIMAL CROSSING
NINTENDO
NGC/98 90%
Gamecube *Animal Crossing*, with online play, in your pocket. Fantastic!



5 VISUALS
Pretty ropey – flat textures, and the camera is drunk.

3 SOUNDS
We'd rather hear the sound of James Blunt than Simlish.

6 MASTERY
Any game that can make hoovering fun is fine by us.

7 LIFESPAN
Days, weeks, months of play – but not much going on.

VERDICT
The Hotel *Sims 2* offers a pleasant stay, but nothing to keep you from checking out after a few weeks.

NGC 67



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	AMAZE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	YES
MIC	YES
COST	£30

THE SIMS 2

Running your own hotel is easy. Too easy…

What the? This isn't *The Sims 2* at all! The whole thing's in third-person, we can't cuddle up in bed with another Sim no matter how hard we ram our flirting skills home… and it hasn't lulled us into a deep, disappointed slumber.

Yes, this DS *Sim*-'em-up is all the better for having ditched the usual *Sims* mechanics. Oddly, you're in charge of a hotel, so all you have to worry about is hoovering, mopping the floor and occasionally keeping your own Sim's 'sanity' meter topped up by sitting on the toilet. The only progress you can make is buying rooms and adding new furniture. It's all very *Animal Crossing*. Which is good.

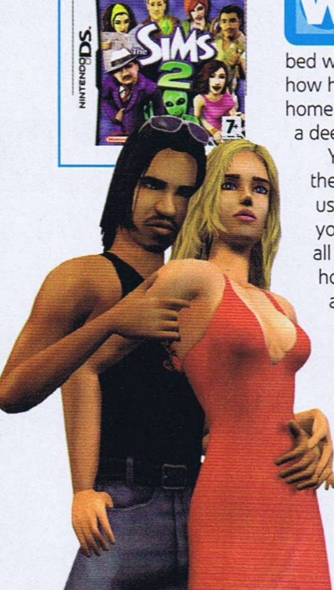
It's not just everyday *Sims* life that's had its fun quotient upped, either. There's tons to do here, from hopping on a *Space Invaders*-style arcade machine to quelling alien invasions with your deadly water pistol. The touch screen is decently used too, both for cutting the amount of menu-fiddling down and laying on quality minigames and diversions. It even makes the chores fun, with the stylus used to rescue items that have been vacuumed up.

So *The Sims 2* was almost a must-buy – but then we ran out of game. Like *Nintendogs* or *Animal Crossing, The Sims 2* is best swallowed in small doses: its clock-hogging time system means there's only a certain amount you can actually do each day. After only a week or two, though, we'd stuffed the hotel full of new rooms, earned enough money to buy everything, and finished teasing out all the guests' dark secrets. Soon you've only got the hoovering left – and none of *AC*'s charming quirkiness to keep you coming back.

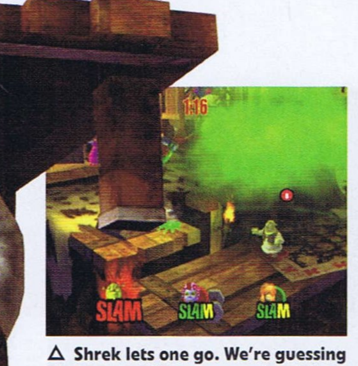
"THIS IS A WELCOME TWIST ON A RAPIDLY TIRING FORMULA"

In fact, as we checked our 157th guest into Hotel Greener, we ended up yearning for the freeform play of 'grown-up' *Sims*. Don't get us wrong: this is a welcome twist on a rapidly tiring formula. There's just not enough of it.

MARK GREEN





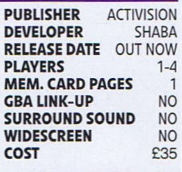

△ Shrek lets one go. We're guessing that an ogre fart pongs quite a bit.


△ You can pick up pool balls and chuck them at your opponents.

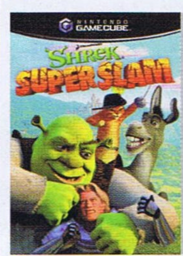

△ Despite Shrek's special guff attack, Gingerbread Man is the best.

SHREK: SUPERSLAM

Or Super Smash Bros with an ogre...



PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	SHABA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



Well, at least it's not a platformer. We don't mean to be cynical, but even eight-year-olds must be getting slightly bored of their favourite cartoon characters starring in those tedious errand-running collectathons by now. You know the ones – talk to your cartoon mate, collect some coins, jump over a few gaps and then spin-attack the odd enemy.

Instead, what we have here is *Super Smash Bros* with Shrek and pals. It's a four-player brawler that's set in 3D arenas, but the



idea here is not to knock out your opponent – that would be far too unfriendly – but instead to get more points than them. Build up your power meter with some basic combos, and when it's full you can pile into your opponent with a superslam. You'll get a point for a slam, but if you get slammed, you'll lose a point. The player with the most points after 90 seconds wins.

It looks quite pretty and it definitely captures the humour of the films – Shrek's special slam is a fart – but it's all very basic stuff and you'll get through the Story mode in less than an hour.

There's more fun to be had in the Multiplayer mode, of course, but you'll have discovered all the combos within ten minutes. And that donkey really is crap.

TOM EAST

6 VISUALS
Bright and chunky toon shapes, with some decent effects.

7 SOUNDS
Cheery tunes, meaty bangs and decent voice acting too.

6 MASTERY
Not exactly a stunner, but it all moves smoothly enough.

6 LIFESPAN
The Story mode is too short, but there are 225 challenges.

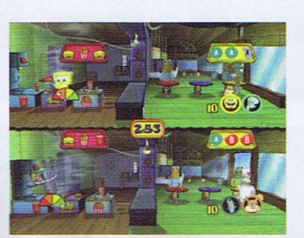
Far better than a lot of licensed stuff we've seen recently, but it's still a basic brawler.

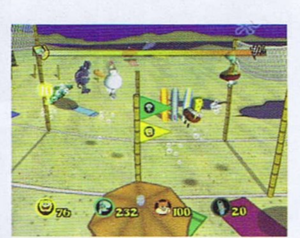


65


△ Box bouncing is dull as Ryvita.


△ Burger flipping isn't better.


△ Burger *serving* is even worse.

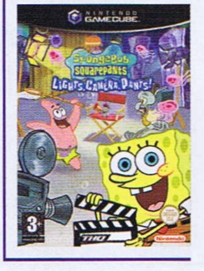

△ This one's bri... No, it's awful.

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS LIGHTS, CAMERA, PANTS

Porous? Poor us, more like....

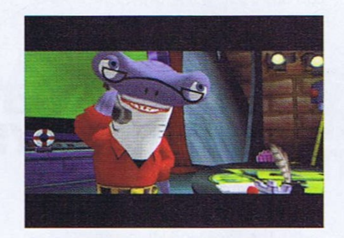


PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	THQ
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	20
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30



It can't be hard to make a decent *Mario Party* clone. Even if you gave the job to a family of rhesus monkeys, they wouldn't be so stupid as to invent a minigame where you simply bounce boxes around – for a full *four minutes*.

But that's exactly what *Lights, Camera, Pants* does, and more. The anaemic line-up of 30 games here aren't just rubbish (they even manage to ruin *Mario Party*'s brilliant Bumper Balls), but they're also all at least four-and-a-half minutes too long. To be fair, it's not



impossible to have fun if you "grab your friends", as the box puts it. Unfortunately, so many of the games are for two-versus-two – the burger-flipping, the jellyfish-catching, the kite-flying – that you'll rarely get that all-out melée of competition, emotion and cackling macaw-like laughter.

At least *Lights, Camera, Pants* offers you some video clips as a reward for wading through the Story mode, unlike this month's other *SpongeBob* game. And we enjoyed the Surf Resc-Goo fishing game (another *Mario Party* copycat), if only because we were so good at it, we quadrupled the CPU-controlled players' points. Really, there should be more games where we always win.

MARK GREEN

4 VISUALS
Clumsy 3D that looks like it's about to fall apart at any second.

4 SOUNDS
Assorted squeaks and grunts from the SquarePants crew.

5 MASTERY
Good to see a four-player game, but it's boring, basic stuff.

5 LIFESPAN
Ideal for a kid's party. Until it's time for pass the parcel.

Why waste your money on one bad SpongeBob game when you can get 30 in one box?

54

"A truly great golf game"



△ Follow the ball on the bottom screen.



△ Getting birdies is easy early on.



△ Zoom in on the green before you tee off.









NINTENDO TOUCH GOLF

It's even sexier than Michelle Wie. Okay, maybe that's pushing it a bit...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	PHOENIX
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



It's refreshing to see Nintendo put its name to a golf game that doesn't star a gorilla who clubs the ball with his big monkey fist. Not that Nintendo is a stranger to the more serious side of the sport, of course. The company has a heritage of producing classic golf games, stretching right back to the brilliantly named *Golf*, which was released on NES in 1984. And now, in 2005, they've just produced another absolute classic.

Just the unique control system is enough for *Nintendo Touch Golf* to see off *Tiger Woods*. It's obvious but brilliant – with your stylus, you drag the club back and then smash it through the ball. It sounds simple, but at first (unless you're a master of disc-flinging in *Nintendogs*) you might find it hard to move your stylus back and forth in a straight line. You can cheat by using a ruler, of course, but with a bit of practice, you'll soon stop whiffing it and start smacking the back straight and true right down the middle of the fairway. Once that's sorted, you can start using the stylus for more advanced techniques, such as draw and fade, which you might need to use in a wireless multiplayer match against an expert.

> IT'S THE MOST INTUITIVE CONTROL SYSTEM EVER

It's the most intuitive control system ever and the golf is just as good. It's all very easy on the early Championship rounds, and once you've mastered putting, you'll be getting those birdies every time. However, when you get to Pro class, the wind kicks up and you have to start thinking carefully about placing your shots on a particular side of the pin.

There's a nice red arrow that shows you where you should aim your shot, but sometimes the slope on the green will be so steep, it becomes impossible to putt in one stroke. Also, if you hit the ball too hard, it can roll down the other side and into the rough. Still, that's the beauty of golf – you can be miles in the lead, only to mess up on one hole and then it's all over.

Touch Golf is a truly great golf game, and the only thing that could possibly improve it would be the inclusion of a Wi-Fi mode.

TOM EAST



- Great control system.
- Good learning curve.
- There are loads of courses to unlock.



- No Wi-Fi mode



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour
Acclaim
NGC/95 85%
Another good Mario sports game, but it just lacks the wackiness that we expect



8 VISUALS

Looks better than other DS sports games like *FIFA* and *Tiger Woods*.

7 SOUNDS

Calming golfing music and a nice rattle when the ball goes in the hole.

9 MASTERY

Smooth animation but there's the odd bit of popup to live with.



9 LIFESPAN

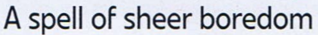
Championship mode will last a while, then there's multiplayer.

VERDICT

Not only a brilliant DS golf game, but one of the best sports titles we've played on any system this year.









A spell of sheer boredom

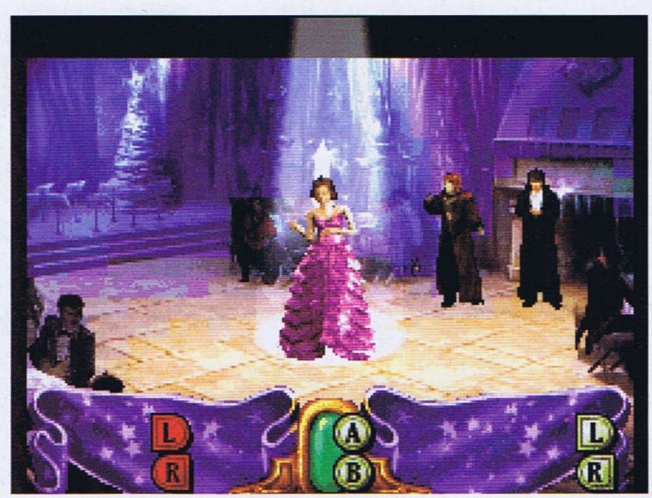








The game's enemies clearly aren't ready for their close-up. *Goblet of Fire*'s 'exciting' 3D battle scenes actually made us melodramatically sigh aloud every time they cropped up.



Static screenshots just can't convey the utter horror of this. Rhythm action games, take one step left, two steps right – and one giant leap backwards.



- Card-collecting for completists.
- Erm, the music's quite nice.



- Horribly repetitive.
- Unimaginative.
- No attempt to match play to film.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow
Konami
NGC/112 4/5
More vampire hunting with some great DS features.



6 VISUALS

It'd all be okay if it wasn't for the gang's floating death-heads.

5 SOUNDS

We could have done without Radcliffe's adolescent squawks.

2 MASTERY

Both screens are used. You can touch the odd thing.

7 LIFESPAN

Depressingly linear, but collecting cards might keep you at it.



VERDICT

A truly harrowing experience for Harry Potter fans. Just call it The Game That Must Not Be Named.



NGC 35

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	YES
MIC	YES
COST	£30



HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

More like half a mug of weak tea…

Forget for a moment that half of the book (and the film) is glossed over in pitiful slideshow cutscenes. Try to ignore the corpse-like complexion on the digital faces of Harry, Ron and Hermione. Pass over the woeful DS-specific extras that make this only a hair's breadth from a lazy port of the GBA version.

Give all those faults the benefit of the doubt and you're still left with The Worst Harry Potter Game Ever.

In *Goblet of Fire*, rocks get levitated and enemies get burned alive with wand power, but only the odd minigame stops this from literally being one long top-down maze. Don't count on the few DS-specific sections to liven things up, either: the tedious screen-scribbling magic spells and embarrassing rhythm-action sections hit the brakes on a game that's already got all the pace of a milkfloat.

You simply won't believe how long you're asked to wander around the Forbidden Forest, throwing tricks at imps hiding in tree stumps and setting fire to bushes with flaming twigs. And then, amazingly, it gets even worse. The best bits of the paper and celluloid *Goblet of Fire* are reduced to tedious reaction tests that bear no relation to the actual task – like Harry somehow grabbing an egg from a dragon by racing in a straight line away from it for five full minutes.

> **"THE BEST BITS OF THE PAPER AND CELLULOID POTTER ARE REDUCED TO TEDIOUS TESTS"**

There's essentially a lot of game here, with deckfuls of hidden cards that can boost your abilities or max out your magic, but exploring Harry's world is so slow-going that you'd sooner stick your head up the business end of a Blast-Ended Skrewt than revisit the levels.

It's all rounded off with the Care of Magical Creatures subgame. This involves guessing what your glorified parasitic maggot wants and then simply dragging across the screen. Get it right five times and you're done. It's truly pathetic. Like *Goblet of Fire* as a whole.

TOM EAST


VIDEOGAME CULTURE
EDGE
NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | PORTABLE | COIN-OP | SET-TOP | ONLINE
THE BEST OF 2005
The Edge Awards showcase the games, hardware, audio, graphics, innovation, developer and publisher of the year
PLUS:
HOW XBOX 360 BEATS PS3
THE CULT OF KATAMARI DAMACY
GP2X: THE HOMEBREW HANDHELD
THE ART OF MODERN GAME MUSIC
TIME EXTEND: BLACK & WHITE
THE MAKING OF ALTER EGO
Issue 158 on sale now



The DS's debut RPG doesn't impress



△ You don't wander around the town – the locations you're allowed to visit are only selectable from a map screen.



△ If you like, you can speed up battles by using the right shoulder button.



△ There's something very SNES-like about the whole adventure. Very disappointing.

LUNAR GENESIS

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	RISING STAR
DEVELOPER	GAMEARTS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	$40 (£23)



The DS gets its first proper role-playing game, but we're not exactly over the moon about it...

There must be thousands of you out there just itching to get a decent RPG for your DS. After all, no platform feels complete until there's a good-sized adventure to quench your thirst for levelling, stat tinkering and clichéd plot development. So while *Lunar Genesis* is more than welcome, being the first proper role-player for this system, it sadly doesn't offer enough of an experience to truly satisfy.

Its failings are pretty obvious even during the first half hour, when it reveals some truly mind-boggling design decisions. First and foremost is your character's unthinkably slow movement. Walking around the gameworld is like wading through a swamp: it's painfully plodding and downright irritating. You do have the ability to run, but there's a penalty on your health if you do so. To be fair, we can see *why* this was implemented – so you can't just run rings around your enemies when in combat – but it just beggars belief that it has been implemented quite so badly.

> "WALKING AROUND FEELS LIKE WADING THROUGH A SWAMP"

There are many more disappointments, too. Your inability to select your target in battle results in a system that's stripped of depth – a seesaw of face slapping with little room for strategy. What makes it worse, however, is the fact that you can't earn EXP and items at the same time, so you find yourself trapped in a situation where you have to grind for one or the other in order to develop your team, or simply accrue the money needed for certain items.

It's quite sad, really, because underneath the game's clunky mechanics is a perfectly agreeable and – sometimes – charming RPG. And it does *try* to offer something new. Collectable cards that allow more powerful attacks are a nice touch, for example, as is the 'defeat all the monsters in an area within the allotted time' element, which unlocks special chests in each area. Unfortunately, though, you're going to have to forgive a multitude of sins before being able to look on it favourably.

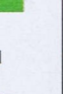
GERAINT EVANS

+

- Solid enough RPG.
- Some original and interesting ideas.

–

- Very basic battle system.
- Painfully slow walking speed.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tales of Symphonia
Namco
NGC/100 84%
A massive quest, beautiful cel-shaded graphics and memorable characters.



6 VISUALS

Busy city split into *Starfox Adventures*-style chunks.

7 SOUNDS

Some pretty good little tunes actually, with ambient effects.

6 MASTERY

Unremarkable. Touch screen movement is fairly unwieldy.

6 LIFESPAN

Quite long, but most of that comes from tedious grinding.

VERDICT

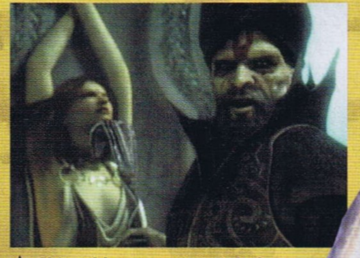
It's by no means awful, but RPG fans will expect a whole lot more than this offers. It's just too basic and uninspiring.



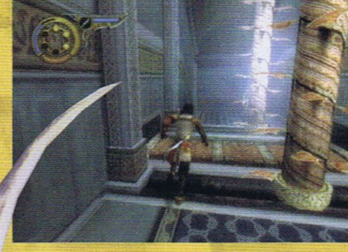




"It'll end in a Scanners-like skull implosion"



△ Skippable cutscenes might have been a good idea.



△ Puzzles are limited to finding switches and avoiding traps.



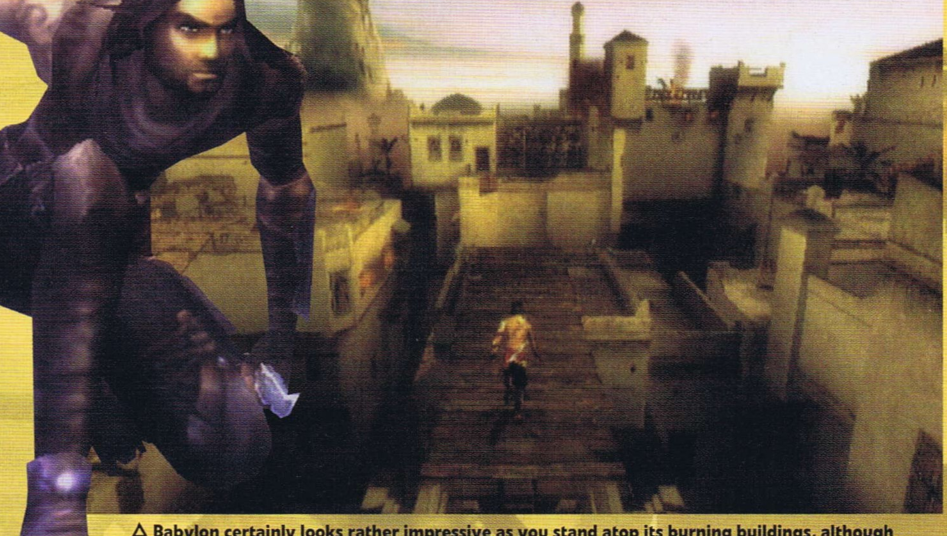
△ The collapsing palace section forces you to both think and act very quickly.



△ Sometimes you'll be rewarded with extra health for finding a hidden route.



△ Jump on the wall-mounted flipper to be catapulted right across the room, or straight into combat.



△ Babylon certainly looks rather impressive as you stand atop its burning buildings, although finding a path can be confusing without the too-rarely-offered overhead camera.

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE TWO THRONES

He hasn't really got two thrones – one's a bidet…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	UBISOFT MONTREAL
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	20
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



△ In its finest and most fluid moments, this game still feels as beautifully simple and slick to play as its predecessors.



Don't even attempt to work out the story behind *The Two Thrones*, because unless you have the same in-depth understanding of time travel as Stephen Hawking, it'll just end in a Scanners-like skull implosion. Instead, hold your frontal lobes in place and accept that somehow Persia's pliant ruler-in-waiting has returned home after *Warrior Within*, but somehow before it too. And as he awakes on Babylon's beach, he discovers that he's really in a parallel universe where the *Sands Of Time* have just run out.

And the Prince isn't the only one keen to forget his second tale – the developers also seem happy to put some distance between themselves and the common-denominator-embracing *Warrior Within*. In a move that warms the soul like an Ovaltine drip, gentle Arabian music has replaced the jarring rock, the boob and bumcake cutscenes

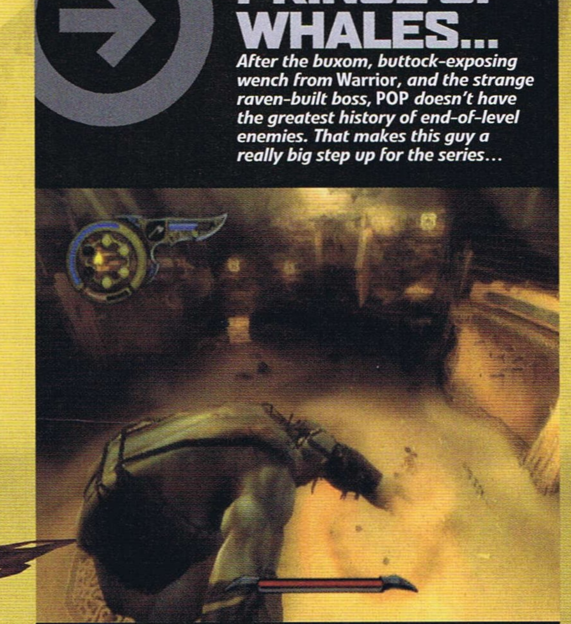
> "THE SEQUEL FEELS FAMILIAR, INVOLVING AND PLAYABLE, BUT IN NEED OF INNOVATION"



At their worst, the fights can be just a long and frustrating distraction from the springing around.

PRINCE OF WHALES…

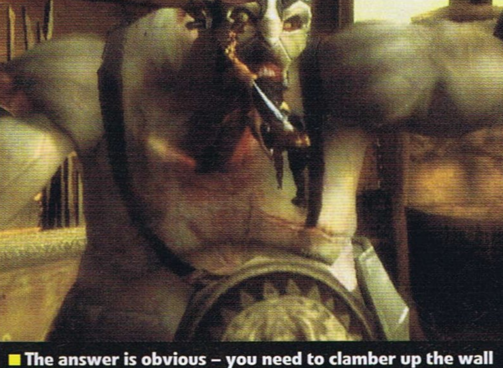
After the buxom, buttock-exposing wench from Warrior, and the strange raven-built boss, POP doesn't have the greatest history of end-of-level enemies. That makes this guy a really big step up for the series…



This lumbering oaf can't be beaten by simply stabbing him in the toes. Well, not yet anyway. First you have to blind him, but how are you going to be able to reach his noggin?



The wall bounce still lets you knock foes over.



The answer is obvious – you need to clamber up the wall and find one of the conveniently placed platforms to leap off. Jump onto the beast and you can then finish him off with a Speed Kill right in the iris.



With Prince thinking out loud once again, the plot is both cheesy and complex.



Thankfully, the gore of the previous game has gone, replaced by something less cynically 'adult'.

have wiggled away and our hero again prattles on like an acrobatic aristocrat, rather than raging like an angsty teen avenger.

But while most of *Warrior*'s needless gore has been mopped up, much of the gameplay and gloom has been retained, so the neatly paced puzzles still play second fiddle to the combo-powered combat, and those time-bending powers are used primarily as weapons, not as gentle prods towards victory. All of that leaves this third sequel feeling familiar, involving and playable, but in need of an injection of innovation.

Of course, the developers have obliged in the shady shape of the hero's playable split personality, the Dark Prince. Designed to add a fresh dimension and drive to the action, this demonic but camp character has a permanent thirst for power, and so with his energy bar constantly falling, you're forced to push on, searching and slaughtering. The only problem is that the heir to hell's throne isn't different or dominant enough in moves or motivation from the reluctant regent. Instead, his weaponry, skills and swinging attack barely expand on our hero's own repertoire. Even more annoyingly, you can't swap royals at will or use their unique skills to solve a particular problem.

Other elements have been more successful in their addition, though, particularly the Speed Kills.



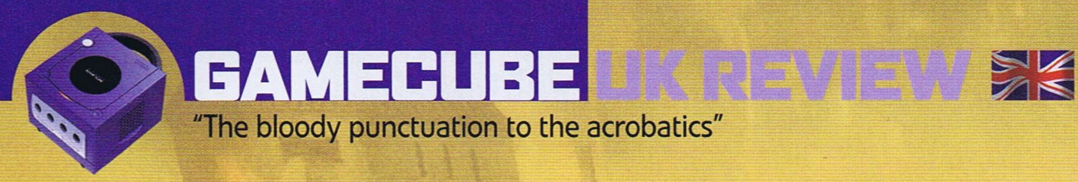


SWITCH BLADES

There aren't any brain-wracking puzzles here. The problems you'll face are more of the 'how do I get there from here?' variety, but if you do find a locked door or sealed room, the switch – and the solution – is normally only a matter of metres away.



Despite having no eyes or a lower jaw, this brute actually seems more able to spot you than ever. With a swinging blade and stamping feet, he can also dismember you with a single blow.





"The bloody punctuation to the acrobatics"

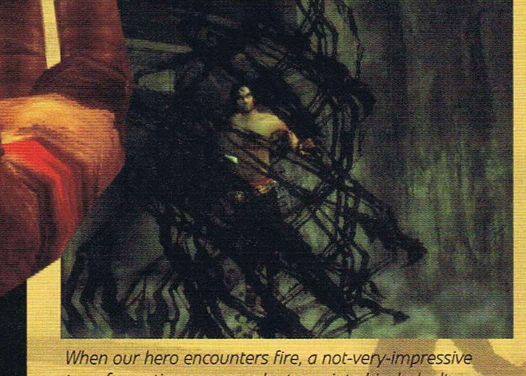
BATTLE THRONE

Creep up behind these masked goons and the screen will adopt a misty look, giving you the cue to hit the Y button. With the switch of camera angle triggered, all you need to do now is bash B as the Prince's blade glows.

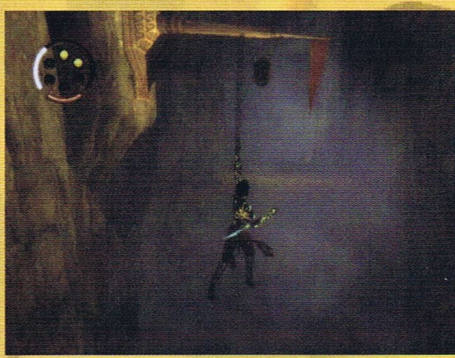


PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Feel the true power of the dark side…



When our hero encounters fire, a not-very-impressive transformation occurs as he turns into his dark alter ego.



Instead of merely leaping through the air, the Dark Prince can use his chain as a weapon or a makeshift swing.



He's meant to be more impressive in combat than the fleshy ruler, but you find yourself using the same moves.



You replenish your energy by killing, but smashing crates also has the same effect. And they put up less resistance.



Created almost as 'stealth-lite' attacks, these strikes demand that you sneak up behind an enemy or dangle unseen above them. Triggered by a couple of carefully timed button presses, at first they seem out of place in an adventure game, but as the tale unfolds, they suddenly fit neatly as the bloody punctuation to the acrobatics – justifying your frantic clambering across the rooftops, ready for the cull.

They also serve a practical as well as an aesthetic purpose, for the seemingly endless scraps have also returned. This time, the sand-powered warp gates are to blame, but as before, when you plunge your sword into a prone foe, his place in the attacking triumvirate is taken by another, and another and another. However, if you're dexterous enough to use a Speed Kill, the balance of the battle – and the game – can be tilted in your favour. If you fail, though, these elongated fights feel like padding.

Of course, as anyone who loved the original game knows, the combat is just a distraction from the series' true glories – the sublime exploration, the supple control and the outrageous athleticism of the prince.

As a location, Babylon matches up nicely with its lofty rooftops, soaring ramparts and dank caverns, but sometimes you yearn for the thrill of such memorable and soothingly paced places as the menagerie or the tower

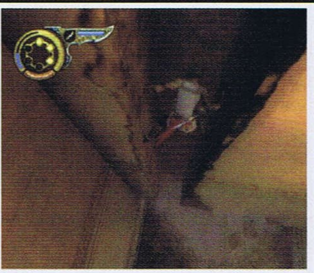


CHARIOTS OF DIRE?

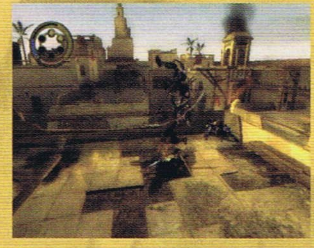
At first, the chariot sequence feels and looks a little like filler. Slightly juddery and simplistic, it isn't exactly a highlight, but once you know how brief and easy it is, you actually start to enjoy it as an easy soldier-squishing, horse-whipping minigame.



THE FRESH PRINCE OF AIR



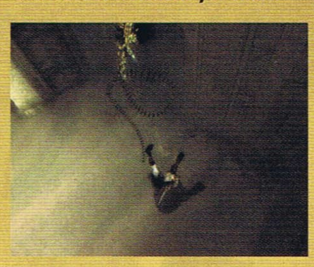
The Prince moves with the supple grace and power of a tiger in Vaseline. He's also gained two new moves – the splits and the dagger plant. Less visually impressive but more useful in opening up the larger areas of play are the wall flippers that catapult you for huge distances. These inject further tension by placing ledges and holds in previously inaccessible places.



△ **The constant fights rush you into making frustrating errors.**



△ **It's short but it's so silly that the chariot race will make you smile.**





- The bosses are much more imaginative.
- Nicely placed restarts.
- As playable as ever.

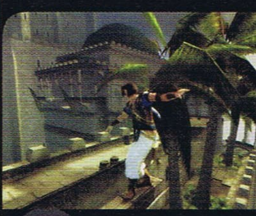


- Too close to *Warrior*.
- The Dark Prince rushes you too much.
- We expected more.



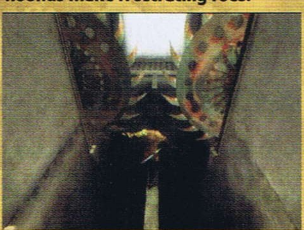
IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time
Ubisoft
NGC/90 91%
Atmospheric and pretty, but too many prolonged battles.





△ **These regenerating time-sucking hounds make frustrating foes.**



from *Sands*. Still, the Prince has developed a number of moves to help him cope in these more cramped urban environs. His new manoeuvres include a Sam Fisher-style splits that helps him slide up and down narrow chimneys, while a useful but not exactly life-changing dagger plant lets you hang where the walls are sheer.

Deja vu must be a problem for anyone who travels through time, but in playing *The Two Thrones*, you too endure that familiar feeling. Not only does this game open with the hero washed up, swordless and angry, but again it closes without finding the balance between joyful adventure and thrilling battle that the series has always threatened. However, with half the atmosphere of the first game, half the carnage of the second, and a few new (if only partially successful) additions, *The Two Thrones* is a welcome resting place for the Prince of Persia.

ALEX COOKE

> **"IT FAILS TO FIND THE BALANCE BETWEEN JOYFUL ADVENTURE AND THRILLING BATTLE"**



8 VISUALS

Fluid in motion and pretty at rest, but the grainy cutscenes jar.



8 SOUNDS

You have a narrator and two voices in your posh head.



7 MASTERY

Feels like a conversion and so the Cube seems to work too hard.

7 LIFESPAN

The time travel means you can complete it without frustration.

VERDICT

A good climax to a great series, but not a fitting one. It makes the right moves but doesn't quite scale the heights.

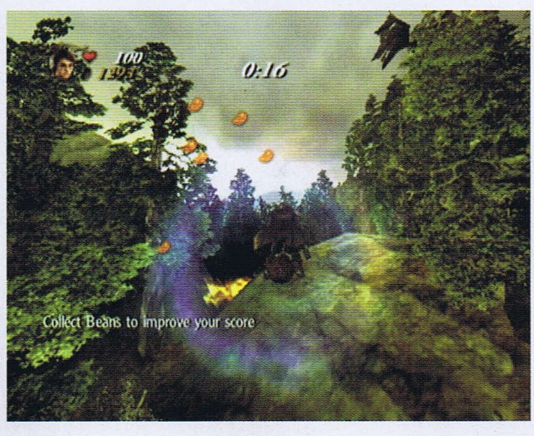
NGC 74

"The trouble all starts with the ginger kid"



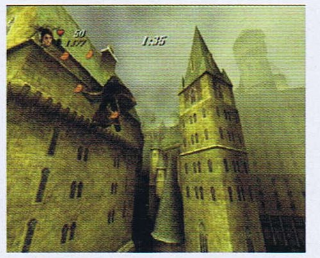






△ There are beans literally everywhere – in pots, inside monsters, in carnivorous plants and even floating in the sky. By rights, Harry ought to be chuffing like a trumpet.







△ "You bloody well do what you're told, Ron, or so help me I'll Cruciatus you until you squeal like a pig. Except that I can't. Bugger."

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Ten points for Gryffindor? Not quite…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-3
MEM. CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30



Goblet Of Fire is the one where Harry enters the Tri-Wizard tournament, which is pretty handy because the three-part challenge lends itself quite well to a computer game. Stephen Fry does a plummy voiceover, everything looks exactly like the film and there's loads to do and collect. And the bit with the dragon, even though you're not really in control of most of it, is actually pretty exciting. In fact, this is probably the part of the review when you'd expect us to say something about how *Potter* is "magic" and "even muggles will like this". Unfortunately, we won't be doing that.

As you'd expect, the trouble all starts with the ginger kid. Each level sees you pick one of the three heroes. You then explore Hogwarts along with the other two, and – in theory – team up to solve puzzles. We say 'in theory' because Ron seems to have his own definition of teaming up, which is basically 'standing around like a lemon'. At best, this is frustrating – certain blocks can't be lifted without help. At worst, it's lethal – enemies like Salamanders require one of you to put their fires out while the others attack them, but this co-operation is difficult to organise. It even ruins the game's cleverest bit – jinxes can be turned into transfigurations and curses by chaining certain attacks together, but there's no way to tell your friends what to do.

> **"EVERYTHING LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE FILM AND THERE'S LOADS TO DO AND COLLECT"**

Even worse, several 'puzzles' have to be done again and again – every level includes three or four Tri-Wizard shields that each instantly transport the gang back to the menu screen, resetting all the gates and respawning all the monsters. Chuck in overblown loading pauses and levels, and a camera that just starts shaking uncontrollably *in our boxed copy*, and you've got a game that deserves a quick spell in Azkaban. Or at least a snog from a Dementor.

JOEL SNAPE



- It looks like Harry!
- You can turn things into rabbits!
- Stephen Fry!



- Ron? Ron?
- Maybe someone's cast a spell on him.
- No, he's just a fool.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup
NGC/88 62%
The rules are stupid, but Potter fans will love the detail in this basketball-style magic sim.



7 VISUALS
A wonky camera derails otherwise impressive looks.



6 SOUNDS
Plenty of banter, but Ron's bean obsession seems unhealthy.



6 MASTERY
If only the AI worked a little bit better, it would be great.



6 LIFESPAN
Seven hours to finish, if you ignore all the pointless sub-quests.

VERDICT
All bases covered on the 'looking a lot like the film' front, but it's a bit lacking on 'actually being fun to play'.



65



Massive movie monkey apes Zelda





△ All Kong's good for is making the odd dinosaur extinct and gobbling up the remains. How incredibly uncivilized of him.



△ They won't be lining up around the block for the cutscenes, clearly.



- It's *Zelda* in the jungle
- Neat object-combining system



- Easy to get lost
- Poor controls
- Kong's bits are 'chest' rubbish



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Legend of Zelda: Minish Cap
Nintendo
NGC/100, 5/5
Shrinky-dinked Link in a typically flawless quest.



7 VISUALS
It's all forest, but one we don't mind getting lost in.

7 SOUNDS
Tribal tunes don't take themselves too seriously.

7 MASTERY
The GBA could do this with one hand tied behind it.

7 LIFESPAN
No sleevefuls of secrets, but there's plenty of main game.

VERDICT
Shuns all of that 'interactive movie' rubbish and quietly delivers a smart, solid jungle jaunt.



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30

KING KONG

On Skull Island, you have to fire and fur-get

This feels like it's stuck in fast forward after *King Kong* on Gamecube. You get literally eight seconds of actual play before Ann's draped over a native and screaming her lungs dry – it took the GC version around three hours to get to the same point.

That's not the only difference. *King Kong* bravely puts a jungle spin on the mighty *Zelda* – and, surprisingly, does a pretty good job of it. The dungeons are fiendishly clever trick-and-trap tests, where puzzling out how to reach that jewel or extend that bridge sucks up a gratifying amount of brain juice. And with top tribal tunes in the background and slick 2D action, there's a nice retro feel to the dino-blasting that dots the mazes.

The three-character system is nicely done too. Admittedly, swapping characters and weapons isn't fun for the fingers: we managed to bomb our own faces off *every time* we tried to switch between Jack Black and That Other Bloke. But when the team splits up or co-operates to deal with evil switch-fiddling puzzle rooms, Ubisoft really show off their skill at giving your mind a sweaty workout. It's initially too easy to leave one character stranded on one side of a room, but you'll learn.

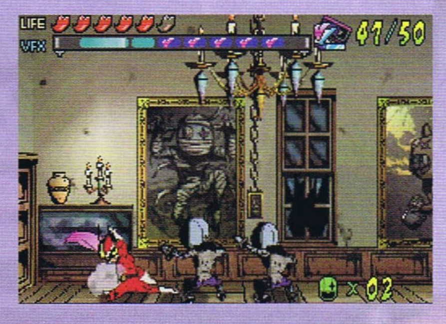
> **"IT BRAVELY PUTS A JUNGLE SPIN ON THE MIGHTY ZELDA"**

One warning: if you've ever been even slightly disoriented in a big Sainsbury's, *King Kong* will get you *really* lost. The game's world is a giant maze of jungle overgrowth, and we spent two hours wandering bayous, clearings and caves in search of the second dungeon. We've had similar pain in *Zelda*, but never to such a befuddling extent as you'll find here.

Once you find your way, you're treated to room after room of the kind of quality block-pushing and falling-down-holes action that the movie itself neglects. In fact, the game's at its worst when it does ape the film (Kong's sections involve walking right and punching T-Rexes). When it's just doing its retro 2D *Zelda* thing, *King Kong*'s jungle antics are (ahem) vine by us.

MARK GREEN









△ As usual, the little icons show you where an attack is going to strike, making dodging easier.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CLOVER
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	$40 (£23)



VIEWTIFUL JOE: DOUBLE TROUBLE

Making a DS debut, it's *VJ* - but not as you know it...



At first glance, there really isn't a world of difference between this and the Gamecube version. It feels, looks and sounds just like the original. The basics are the same, too. You move with the D-Pad and double jump with A. There are two separate buttons for punch and kick, and there's the VFX meter that decreases the more you use Joe's special abilities. Your first VFX, Slow, works the same too: dodge enemy attacks, hit Slow and send opponents ricocheting off each other. The better you fight, the more V points you earn and the more you can power up later.

That's about as far as the similarities go, though. You see, other than Slow, *Double Trouble* has a completely new set of VFX powers – powers that are a little more drastic and imaginative than in previous games. The first of these is Scratch – holding down the right shoulder button enables you to physically scratch the touch screen, something that can be used to shake items down on an enemy to daze or kill them. You can use it to burst balloons an enemy may be flying under, or even break through walls and topple boulders. But this is still relatively simple compared to the other two additions.

Split is perhaps the cleverest of them all. This allows you to swipe your finger horizontally across the screen so you can slide the top independently from the bottom. This has a number of uses. For example, you can position items at the top of the screen to line up with the bottom, like moving a magnet over to pick up a wrecked car, or moving a burning platform over a fire hydrant to douse the flames. It can also be used to attack enemies by positioning heavy objects at the top of the screen above them.

The last VFX power is Slide, which enables you to pull the zoomed-in view on the top screen down to the bottom. This brings objects closer to you so they can be manipulated on the touch screen – like turning cogs, flicking switches and killing enemies by tapping them with your finger.

All these new skills make for a very different kind of *VJ*, one that's focused less on fighting and more



HAMMY

We've always had a strange appreciation for VJ's over-the-top cheesy dialogue, but the lack of voice acting here doesn't do it any favours. The cutscenes are pretty lame, and you have to manually push each one forward using the stylus.

SPLIT N SLIDE
Those new VFX powers explained





With a swipe of your finger, you can split the screen in two and manipulate the scene to suit your needs. For instance, you can split open pipes to fill a scene with water.



Hold down R and scratch the screen to send heavy objects raining down on the enemy. You can even use this power to break open boulders or burst balloons.




By swapping the views on the top and bottom screen, you can bring objects in the background – like these buttons – closer, which means you can touch-operate them.



In this instance, you have to crush a car to get at an object inside. Split the screen to move the magnet to the car and, once picked up, use Slide to operate the crane.





△ **The game takes place over a number of film sets – in this case, a gruesome hospital.**

△ **Being scaled down for DS, you don't get the amount of enemies that you're used to.**

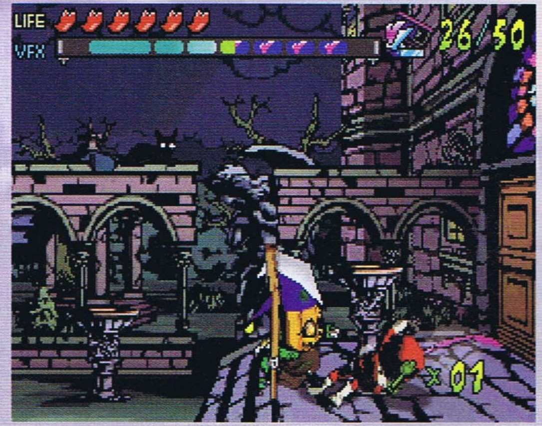
△ **Puzzles often span huge rooms. There are visual cues for each VFX skill that's required.**

on its twisted brand of puzzle solving. It's a welcome change of pace, which has probably been brought on by the limitations of the hardware – you rarely see two enemies on screen at the same time and so the potential of the touch screen is the main focus.

Incidental puzzles often span individual rooms. The cleverer of these require you to use all your VFX puzzles together in order to unlock access to the next area. This does highlight a couple of issues, though. Controlling Joe with the D-Pad and attacking with the buttons is one thing. Having to shift focus between two screens, as well as accurately using the touch screen and shoulder buttons for the desired VFX, is another thing entirely, and can often feel a little clumsy. This, combined with the rather clunky way the story and cutscenes are presented, is the only thing that prevents this solid effort from matching its predecessors.

GERAINT EVANS

> **"POWERS ARE A LITTLE MORE DRASTIC AND IMAGINATIVE THAN IN PREVIOUS GAMES"**



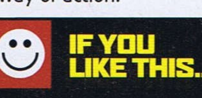
△ **By collecting the special film cans dotted around the levels, you can gain more power for your VFX meter.**

+

- Clever puzzles.
- Great use of the touch screen.
- It's *VJ* on DS!

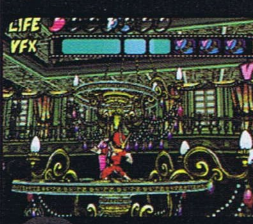
–

- Can feel a little bit clumsy at times.
- Not much in the way of action.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Viewtiful Joe
Capcom
NGC/84 90%
The original and still the best. It's a brilliant hardcore slice of stylish fighty action.



8 VISUALS
Impressive. Bar the lower resolution, it's like *VJ* on Gamecube.

8 SOUNDS
Familiar themes, a great soundtrack and a load of 'Henshin'.

8 MASTERY
The unique features of the DS are used with imagination.

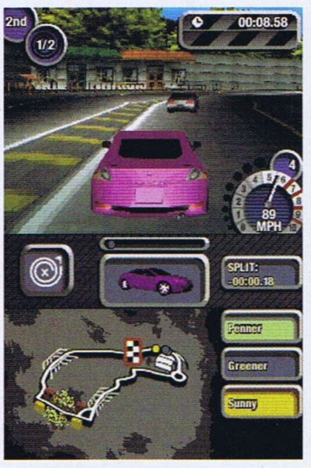
7 LIFESPAN
With no heavy action, earning rainbow V's isn't quite as appealing.

VERDICT
***VJ* is certainly impressive to look at, although the swing to a more puzzle-orientated style of play won't please everyone.**

NGC 81


Mobile Games
Midnight Poker
Once you're at the table, there's no room for joking around. Your opponents will use their ultra-realistic artificial intelligence to wipe out your savings in no time, if you let them do it! All the characteristics of a real Texas Hold'em game have been included in this ultra-realistic simulation created by true Poker lovers.
Play 50
Four Four Two Trivia Quiz
FourFourTwo Trivia Quiz offers you the chance to test your knowledge in the ultimate football quiz on mobile! Start off with the National Cup. Winning this title will unlock the European Cup, and a victory at the European cup will unlock the International Cup! Are you up for the challenge!
Play 44
War of the Worlds
War of the Worlds consists of 13 levels of pure shooting action in 5 different environments inspired by the film and its universe. You will marvel at the amazing graphics depicting Osaka, London, and New York as they are overcome by the tripods. In order to maximize your score, you must destroy as much as possible.
Play 47
Midnight Pool
Midnight Pool™ brings you into the competitive universe of a genuine American pool hall. You will face 8 original players, none of whom are ever at a loss for words! Choose from 3 available characters, then unlock the others in Tournament mode, where you can play with the rule set of your preference.
Play 39
Asphalt Urban GT
Asphalt: Urban GT™ takes you out on 8 tracks inspired by genuine places. Each track is part of a specific graphic universe and includes different tunnels and elevations that enable you to perform impressive jumps, among other things ... But watch out! Don't get flashed or stopped by the police.
Play 36
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory
For the first time in the Splinter Cell series for mobile phones, you can use brand new weapons to confront your enemies, like Knives, Drones, Grenades - and your enemies even have sniffer dogs to track you down in the dark!
Play 41
Midnight Bowling
Besides the authentic spirit of the game, Midnight Bowling takes you to all of the hottest bowling alleys, from Star Light to Ocean Alley. Each time you'll discover a different but alluring setting. Exceptional gameplay, including the exclusive spin control: even after you've thrown the ball, guide it right towards a strike!
Play 52
New York Nights
"New York Nights is a new kind of simulation game, with funny and unexpected situations. Thanks to its intuitive gameplay, for the first time on your mobile phone you can live and interact in New York: do bodybuilding, go to a concert, even dance in a nightclub!
Play 40
Massive Snow Boarding
Massive Snowboarding allows you race on the worlds most famous downhill tracks. With state of the art 3D graphics and fantastic gameplay we promise you'll find it very hard to put that phone down. Plenty of tracks and characters to chosse from with a banging soundtrack.
Play 53
Sexy Poker 2004
Play saucy strip poker whenever you want... Animated using brilliant artificial intelligence, your sensual partners take great pleasure in adding a little fantasy to your mobile. But watch out, these girls aren't easy and they all have strong personalities.
Play 10
Medieval Combat
Medieval Combat offers perfect gameplay and favors spectacular attacks: destroy parts of your adversary's armor in order to deliver increasingly deadly blows. The more you hit your opponent, the more you increase your magic gauge, to the point where you can unleash a devastating fury!
Play 49
2005 Real Football
2005 Real Football features realistic and extremely detailed animations (dribbling, scissor kicks etc), and captures the ambiance of a real match! These features, combined with graphics based on authentic 3D models, intuitive gameplay and improved artificial intelligence, make 2005 Real Football the leader in football games.
Play 43
To order a single game text the Item Code to 60111
eg. to order Asphalt Urban GT text Play 36 to 60111
£4.50 each
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Martial Arts Videos now on your mobile!
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Watch Ian Freeman show you what fighting methods work best on the street.
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Wing Chun Master
ATTACK1
IAN 'THE MACHINE' FREEMAN
UFC Veteran
ATTACK3
MICHAEL WONG
Tai Chi Combat
MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL
ATTACK5
NEIL ADAMS
British Olympian MBE
Some of the techniques shown: How to defend yourself and attack when the fight goes to the ground. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Champion shows you how its all done.
Brtish National Olympic Team coach Neil Adams MBE shows you effective Judo techniques that work in real life situations. No fancy moves here - just real methods that could save your life.
Cage Rage Mixed Martial Arts
ATTACK4
DAVE O'DONNEL
This is your amazing chance to get up close and personal with some of the best martial artists from around the world, don't miss it...
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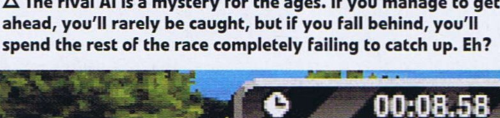


△ A pint of milk is more exciting.



△ Half-hearted customisation ahoy.





△ The rival AI is a mystery for the ages. If you manage to get ahead, you'll rarely be caught, but if you fall behind, you'll spend the rest of the race completely failing to catch up. Eh?



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA CANADA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

Call the cops! This 'game' is illegally bad.

At last: a *Need for Speed* game that everyone can enjoy. *Most Wanted* is this year's most entertaining racer – because it's a point-and-laugh disaster of a game, hilariously inept all the way from start line to finish flag.

Out go all the things that made the Gamecube version a decent ride: the multi-vehicle cop chases, the tons of upgradeable engines and vinyls, and the chance to steal rivals' rides. The skeleton of a racer that's left is basically a straight point-to-point speed jaunt, with races often lasting no more than 35 seconds. And it's simply one of the worst racers we've ever played.

The speedometer says 100mph, but it feels like 40 as you crawl around the pig-ugly tracks that seem to be made from wet cardboard, wrestling with broken-bicycle handling that leaves you bouncing off track barriers like a pinball. You always come off worse attempting to barge traffic, and you soon work out why – everyone else is on a dutiful Scalextric-style path, with robot cars dutifully glued to the track at a fixed speed, right down to chinking left and right to keep to the series of shallow diagonals that comprise a turn.

It all turns *Most Wanted* into an unnervingly empty experience, compounded by the brainless and rarely-seen police presence. Cop cars usually appear one at a time, zip left and right for a bit as though dangled on God's fishing line, then pile straight into a crash barrier, their work apparently done. There's the odd subgame where you have to actually flee the filth properly, but the game's lack of any sort of crash-and-bash feature makes the whole thing befuddlingly random. If you slow to a stop, you're presumed busted, even if the nearest 'pursuer' just sped off.

> **"SIMPLY ONE OF THE WORST RACERS WE'VE EVER PLAYED"**

The worst of *Most Wanted* left us completely breathless, from the Barricade races where one nudge of a blockade ends your game instantly, to the opportunity to evade a bust by playing a card game on the touch screen *in mid-race*. This is a dreadful, dreadful multi-car pile-up of a game. Give it a very wide berth.

MARK GREEN



■ Made us laugh.



■ Drunken handling.
■ Robotic rivals.
■ Non-existent cops.
■ Everything else.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Ridge Racer DS
EA
NGC/108 3/5
The best straight racer on DS, even though it's pretty tough to control.



3 VISUALS
Pop-up, fog and greyness: it's the N64 days all over again.

3 SOUNDS
The rattle of the subway train is nice. That's it.

3 MASTERY
How did this get Nintendo's Seal of Approval?

2 LIFESPAN
A short series of challenge-free 30-second races.

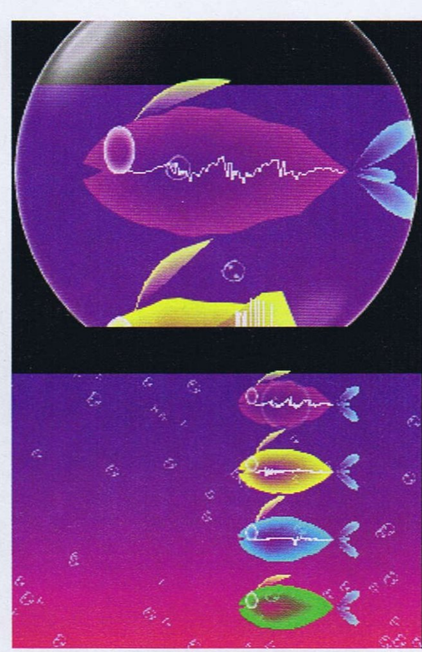
VERDICT
Get it out of our sight.

NGC 17

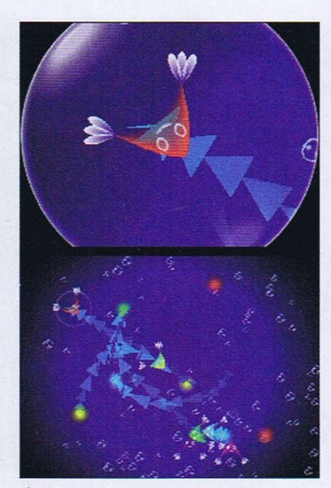
"The best are the more subtle plankton"



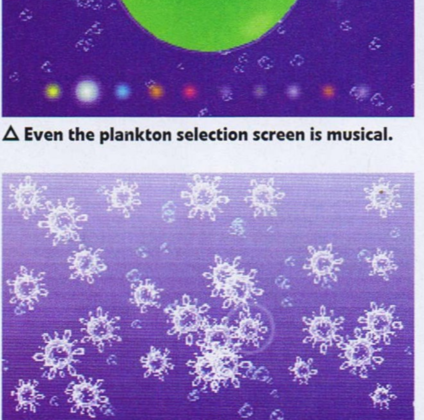
△ Even the plankton selection screen is musical.



△ Four channels to record. Great for rude songs.



△ Tracy turn your lines into music.







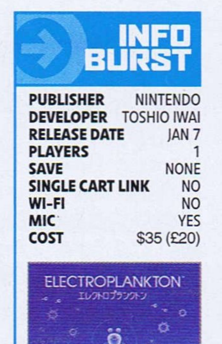
△ Tap the arrows to change tune.

ELECTROPLANKTON

It's fishy but funky! Nintendo's first non-game finally comes in to land…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	TOSHIO IWAI
RELEASE DATE	JAN 7
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	NONE
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	YES
COST	$35 (£20)



Bit of a strange one this. Strange in that it's not actually a game. It's the work of one man – Toshio Iwai, an Interactive Media Artist best known for work blending sound and music with visuals. *Electroplankton* is his most recent project for a games console and the premise is very simple.

There are nine different types of plankton, each of which uses sound and light in a drastically different way. With one type of plankton, you draw lines and the plankton then trace them, chiming as they go. The sounds they make are dictated by where on the screen you draw the line, the shape it makes, and the speed with which you draw it. For another type, you track circles over doughnut-shaped plankton, which spin and send out washes of sound and colour.

Others are a little harder to grasp, like Hannenbow, tadpole-like plankton that leap from the water and make sounds like plucked strings as they hit the leaves on a plant. By altering the angle of the leaves with your stylus, you can send them ricocheting off other leaves to pick out little looped melodies. Luminaria – four little star-shaped plankton – follow courses of arrows set out on a grid, chiming with each pass of an arrow, which you can aim in any of eight different directions.

The best, however, are the more subtle plankton. Sun Animacule, for example, let you plant little eggs that grow over time. Making delicate little noises, the pitch and tone vary depending on where you lay them.

> **"NOT MUCH OF A GAME, IT'S MORE LIKE AN AMUSING TOY"**

One thing is consistent throughout, though, and that's each plankton's ability to at worst, make you smile; at best, make you laugh out loud. No one can resist the microphone-fuelled beats of Rec-Rec, little fish that let you record beats and sound much like a four-track, or Volvoice, a simple recording plankton that plays back your voice through amusing filters.

True, there isn't much of a game here – it's more like an amusing little toy, and you won't find yourself fiddling with it for hours on end – but it's still the kind of quick, amusing experience that will be in and out of your DS for months to come.

GERAINT EVANS



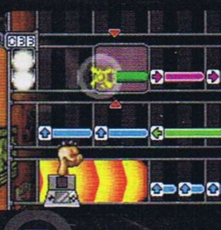
- Original.
- Very funny.
- Strangely hypnotic.



- There's not much content here.
- Not particularly long-lasting.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Daigasso Band Bros
NINTENDO
NGC/103 4/5
Another brilliant DS musical game, which lets you murder J-Pop like a bad school band.





8 VISUALS
Simple, yet clear and nicely stylised. Very unique. Very artistic.



9 SOUNDS
Loads of bleeps, bloops, strings, tinkles and chimes.



8 MASTERY
Uses all the functions of the DS in a new and refreshing way.



6 LIFESPAN
Not for extended play, but you'll keep coming back to it.

VERDICT
This is something that really is a bit different. It's great to dip in and out of – just to put a little smile on your face.





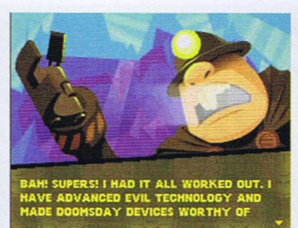




△ And to think the whole game could have been this much fun.



△ If we just wanted to punch robots all day… er, we'd do it.



△ As featured at the end of the movie. Clearly needs a dentist.

THE INCREDIBLES RISE OF THE UNDERMINER

Just don't go holding out for a hero…



INFO BURST	
PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	HELIXE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



You can't help but wince when you see the words 'Giant Robot Factory 1' in a game. That's because no matter how thoroughly the level examines the whole concept of robots and factories, you can be fairly sure that there's going to be a 'Giant Robot Factory 2' coming up. And probably a '3' as well.

Rise of the Underminer goes one further: three robot factories, then another three levels that are largely identical – except they're covered in ice. Yes, Helixe has decided this is a game that's going to be about punching robots in a factory, and by crikey it *is* about punching robots in a factory. Two characters, six or seven moves between them, a dozen types of robot to smash, and that's your lot. The only thing it's got going for it is Frozone's superb ice-surfing move – which you've hardly ever got reason or space enough to use.



△ Run out of ideas? Just cover the levels in snow and ice. Sorted.

Extremely poor use of the DS ("Tap bottom third of screen to jump!") is no surprise in such a cynical and repetitive platforming bore. And boss-mole The Underminer is actually given the line: "I am undermined by your efforts." *Please.*

MARK GREEN

7 VISUALS
Nice cartoony crayonings, but stop-start animation.

5 SOUNDS
Your ears will be so underwhelmed they'll go to sleep.

2 MASTERY
The controls are supervillain-esque in their evilness.

4 LIFESPAN
A test to see which ends first: the game or your patience.

Imagine a superhero's foot stamping on a robot face, forever. Incredible is not the word.



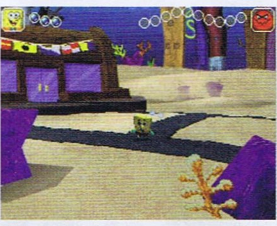
40



△ Even in motion, SBSP doesn't move much faster than this.



△ Happy to jump on enemies, almost like Mario never existed.



△ Pushing left to move out of the screen? Good job, well done.

△ The jellyfish-milking minigame left us feeling a little bit funny.

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS THE YELLOW AVENGER

Unable to mop up all our tears.

INFO BURST	
PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	TANTALUS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



According to the people whose job it is to know these things, *Yellow Avenger* is suitable only for those aged seven and older. They could have fooled us. Surely only people still in nappies could find anything to enjoy in this nothing of a game. Namely the shiny, pretty box.

The walking sponge is given 'missions' by his friends, which usually involve walking at an achingly slow speed to another person or place on a teeny-tiny map, and then walking back.



There's a light sprinkling of super-basic platforming, and the touch screen is used rather cleverly to open cupboards, operate TVs and, er, milk jellyfish. But for the most part, you're simply strolling back and forth along fixed pseudo-3D paths, feeling your brain turn to mush and wrestling with controls that mean you're often pushing left to make SpongeBob walk straight forward. Very smart.

Adding insult to injury, there's an absolute maximum of five hours of gameplay here, and there aren't even any speech samples or video clips to give the hardcore SpongeBob fan enough of a square-troursered fix. Just make sure you ex-sponge this utter rubbish from your shopping list.

MARK GREEN

3 VISUALS
They're 3D, but seen from so far out that you can't really tell.

5 SOUNDS
Incessant music and the occasional 'hup' from the living cube.

6 MASTERY
We enjoyed sliding open cupboard doors with the stylus.

1 LIFESPAN
Swap £30 for this? You may as well buy those magic beans.

For kids? This is an insult if you can do more with your fingers than put them in your mouth.



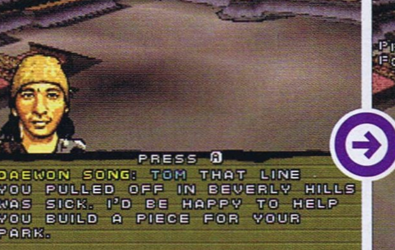
28

"Duuuuuuuuuuuuud!"



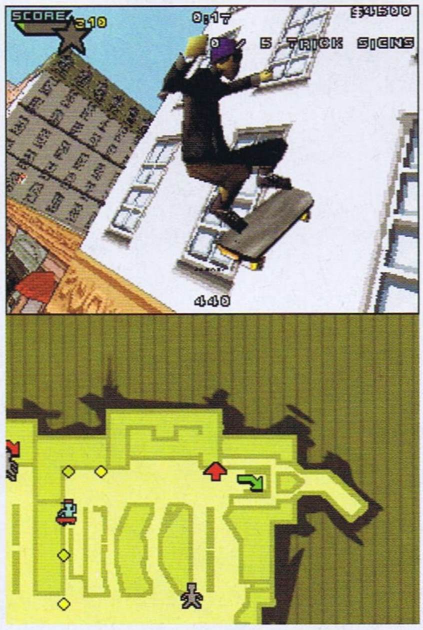
SK8 PARK

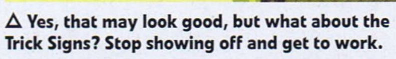
Complete enough tasks in Story mode and you can start creating your very own skate park. Depending on how much cash you've earned, you'll be able to buy one or more ramps from a choice of three. Even better, you can try before you buy. Also, if you're bored of any of your ramps, you can sell them.











△ Yes, that may look good, but what about the Trick Signs? Stop showing off and get to work.



△ You really have to see this moving to appreciate how good it looks. As proven with games like *Mario Kart* and *Nintendogs*, it's amazing what developers can do when they try to get the most out of the system.

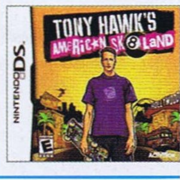
NGC STAR GAME

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN SK8LAND

For when you're bored of Mario Kart online. If ever.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	VICARIOUS VISIONS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
WI-FI	YES
MIC	NO
COST	£35





If the word 'dude' (pronounced 'duuuud') makes you feel slightly nauseous, you might want to turn the volume down on your DS. Almost every time you complete a challenge here, some pro skater (or should that be sk8ter), impressed by your skills, will say 'dude' in such an irritating way, it's almost enough to make you wish you hadn't bothered doing a 4th Storey Varial over a 20-foot drop.

Then again, it is called *Tony Hawk's American Sk8land*, so what did you expect? Originally we thought the '8' was just a pathetic attempt to make the game sound more street, but we've since realised that this is actually the eighth game in the *Hawk's* series. Despite this, Tony hasn't grown tired, and with this DS version, Vicarious Visions seems determined to keep the action fresh.

For starters, it's one of only two DS online games at the moment, but it's also one of the finest-looking games on the increasingly excellent handheld. There was nothing particularly wrong with the isometric view that we'd become accustomed to on GBA, but this is the first entirely 3D *Hawk's* on a handheld console and it's superb. Not only that, but for DS, Vicarious Visions has sprayed it with a bit of neat cel-shading. It looks great too – better than the PlayStation original and cooler than the latest Gamecube offering.

With visuals this good, you'd expect it to be quite limited, but no – you can pull off the full set of ridiculously over-the-top moves around the streets of LA, there are loads of challenges to complete, and if you don't fancy chatting to people who say "dude" every five seconds, you can give the Story mode a miss and go to Classic mode, where you can get high scores against the clock and collect S-K-A-T-E tokens. If you do stick

> "THIS IS THE FIRST ENTIRELY 3D HAWK'S ON A HANDHELD CONSOLE AND IT'S SUPERB"

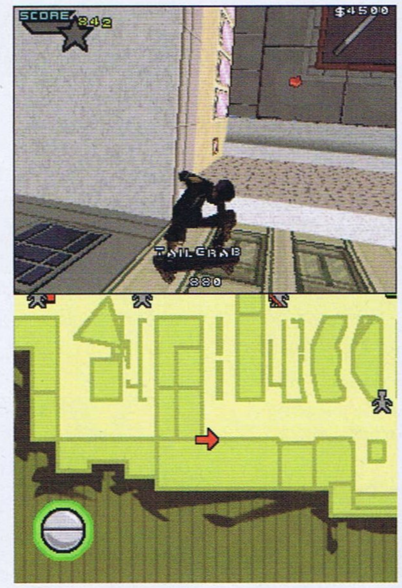


STYLUS SCRIBBLES

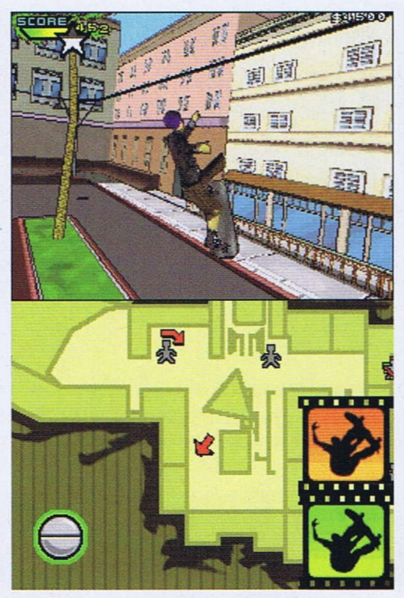
Of course you can choose baggy clothes, stupid hats and rubbish haircuts to create your own skater, but you can also make your own skateboard designs by scribbling on the lower screen with the stylus. Above is our attempt at the NGC logo. Edwards, we need you back…

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN SK8LAND

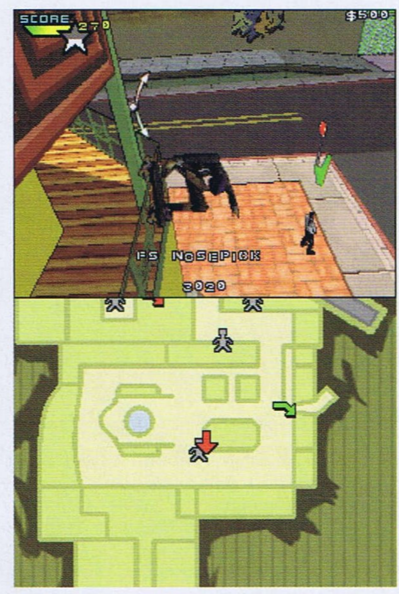
Online ollies on your DS!



△ Touch the bars to regain points after falling.



△ Tap those squares to do a special move.



△ Some of the tricks are truly outrageous.

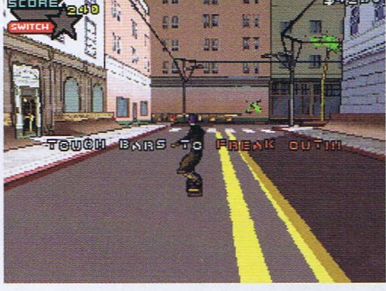


△ Grinding, or FS 50-50ing, is the easiest way to get big scores.



△ Our favourite trick – a Natas Spin on a concrete post.







with the Story mode, you'll earn some cash that can be spent on ramps for your very own skate park, the aim being to create the perfect park to really impress Tony Hawk and his fellow pros.

There are some DS-specific stylus moves too. Fill up the specials bar by pulling off strings of combos and a trick box will pop up on the bottom screen. Now tap it and you'll do a flashy trick move without having to mangle the buttons. There's also something called Freakout, where you have to tap moving bars to make your skater recover points after a fall. It's nothing spectacular, just more proof that Vicarious Visions has really thought about how to make a good DS game.

The most incredible thing about *Tony Hawk's American Sk8land* is how smoothly it all moves. There are eight levels in Story mode, so you might expect it to be a bit shaky when you're grinding along rails at top speed, but the action never slows down and the visuals are always sharp.

Sure, the controls can be a little annoying when you're trying to stop and tag a wall, and Hawk veterans will find that some of the challenges in Story mode are far too easy, but with the added online extras, this is not only the best handheld Hawk yet, but it also beats the Gamecube version. Amazing. Or, as the pros say, "Duuuuuuuuuuuud!".

TOM EAST



△ Impress this bloke by pulling off a Manual. It's hard not to run him over, but as long as you have the skills, he won't mind. Much.



- Great visuals.
- Loads of challenges.
- Decent music.



- Can get a bit easy.
- There are a few control issues.
- "Dude"!



SSX: On Tour
EA
NGC/114 82%
A very worthy and engaging downhill skid-a-thon. Now comes with added skis.





Tony Hawk's really suits the snazzy cel-shaded graphics.



Green Day's *Holiday* is the highlight of a punky soundtrack.



Never drops below 60fps. As smooth as *Sonic Rush*.

9 LIFESPAN

Challenges, Classic mode and online battles. Endless.

VERDICT

All the good bits from the console version have been packed in here, with the added bonus of online play. Amazing.



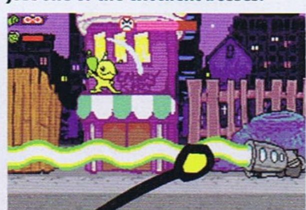
90



"It's not the most subtle of shooters"

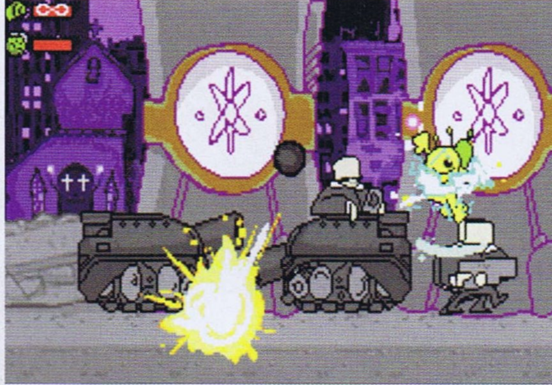


△ You can blast downwards to help slow your descent. If you want to.



△ This concrete-vomiting beast is just one of the excellent bosses.

△ We have to admit that the clear, stylish visuals certainly appeal.



△ The way the game's difficulty increases (usually by just piling on more and more of the same enemies) isn't that imaginative.



- Lovely art style.
- Simple arcade shooting action.
- Steep challenge.



- A little shallow.
- Not particularly original.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Gunstar Future Heroes
Treasure
NGC/113 5/5
A supremely imaginative and technically impressive take the Mega Drive classic.



8 VISUALS
Absolutely cracking. Beautifully animated, clear and sharp.

7 SOUNDS
Great music and plenty of meaty effects. Nice.

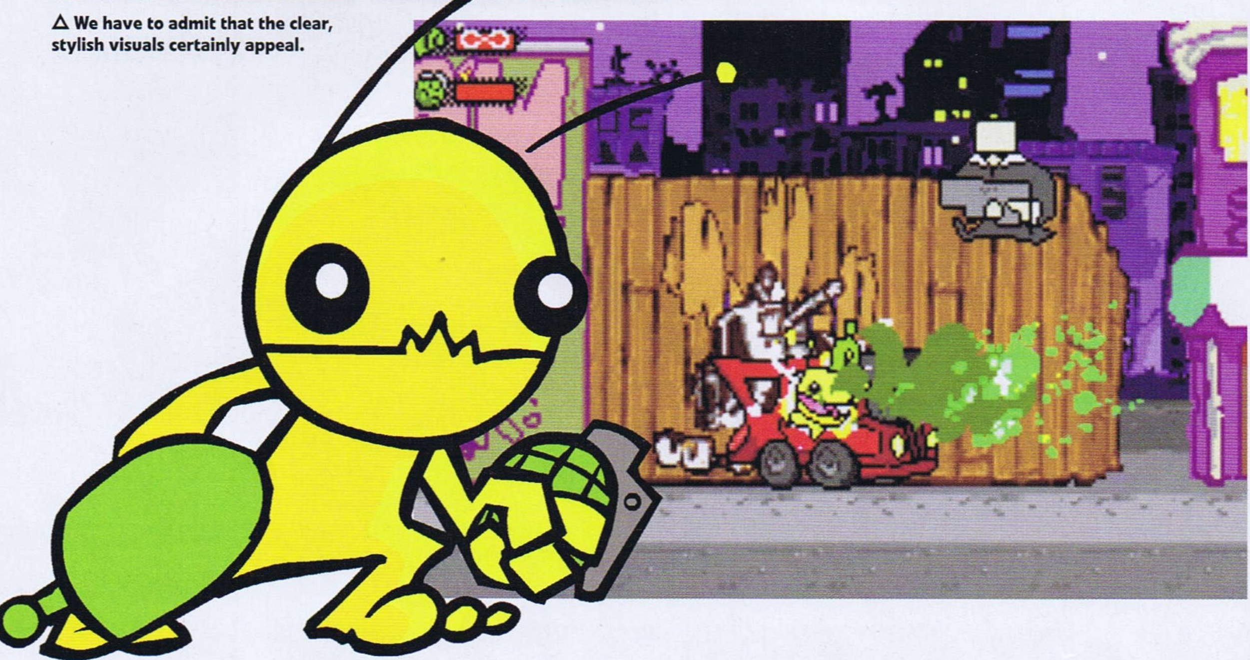
6 MASTERY
It's simple fare, but the brash visuals make up for it.

7 LIFESPAN
Stick it on hard and grit your teeth for eternity. Difficult.

VERDICT
It doesn't do much, and it's hardly the most complicated game in the world, but it's a solid blast none the less.

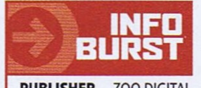


NGC 79



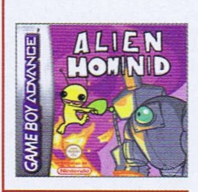
ALIEN HOMINID

Extraterrestrial action that's not quite out of this world



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ZOO DIGITAL
DEVELOPER	BEHEMOTH
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE CART LINK	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£20



There's no denying that *Alien Hominid* has a certain charm to it. Visually, it's quite the looker, with beautifully animated, slick and stylised cartoon visuals, giving this relentlessly difficult shooter a unique atmosphere.

Some of you may already be familiar with it. It started life as a free game on newgrounds.com, starring a little yellow alien going up against armies of FBI agents in order to get his ship back. It was insanely difficult – so tough, in fact, that we couldn't even get off the first stage. Thankfully, the difficulty's been toned down somewhat – not massively, mind you, but enough to make it a little bit more accessible.

> **"BLITZING THE HORDES OF FBI AGENTS INTO HUNKS OF MEAT CAN BE INTENSELY SATISFYING"**

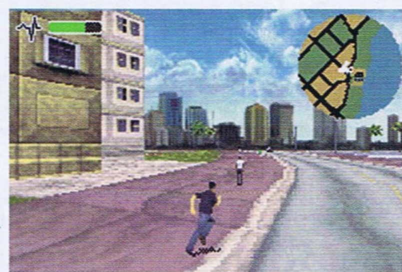
It's not the most subtle of shooters. You can move left and right, jump, shoot and, if enemies get too close, cleave them in two with a melée attack. That's basically your lot. The only real layer of depth to the control, if you can call it that, is the fact that when jumping, you can shoot down to slow your descent. However, what it loses on fine nuances it makes up for in a barrage of enemies, mini-bosses and a consistently solid level of fun. For a quick arcade-style blast, it really can't be faulted, and blitzing the hordes of FBI agents that come your way and turning them into hunks of meat can be intensely satisfying.

Unfortunately, though, it's up against some pretty stiff competition for your money. Had we reviewed this a couple of months back, we may have been more enthusiastic, but given that *Gunstar Future Heroes* is so utterly sublime and technically jaw-dropping (it's been jammed in our Micros ever since last month's review), *Alien Hominid* seems somewhat weak in comparison.

GERAINT EVANS



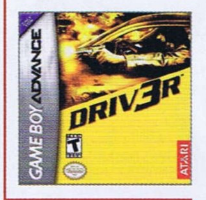






INFO BURST

FROM	ATARI
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE LINK	NO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
COST	£25



DRIVER 3

It's hard not to be faintly impressed initially. Sure, the textures ripple and warp a little bit as you move, like you're running around on fabric, and there's an unholy amount of pop-up to deal with too, but hey – it's in 3D! Look! And it's not a complete mess!

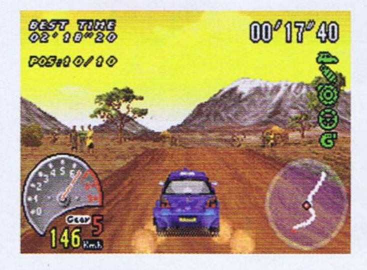
There's a distinct *GTA* thing going on here. You can walk around and get in cars, and after picking up your gun from the precinct in your first mission, you can go and shoot people too.

Unfortunately, the novelty wears off after five minutes. Vehicle handling and collision physics (that send you bumping off objects as though your car were made of rubber) make even early missions a frustrating test of patience. Sure, there are plenty of missions and challenges to play, but given that they're all either dull or irritatingly difficult, it's hard to bring yourself to actually try in the first place. A good effort, certainly, but hardly one we could recommend. **GE**

△ It looks okay for a GBA game. Shame the handling's so rubbish.



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INFO BURST

FROM	ATARI
PLAYERS	2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE LINK	NO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
COST	£20



V-RALLY & STUNTMAN

While neither of these games is going to win any awards, there's no arguing that there's plenty of content here, and both games are pretty agreeable, if somewhat unremarkable.

V-Rally is a solid enough little driving game, like an incredibly basic version of *Sega Rally*. It offers acceptable handling and nice presentation, and these make playing it a rather enjoyable experience overall.

Stuntman, on the other hand, isn't quite as good. It basically plays like a driving version of Simon Says, with you having to complete courses by hitting the right objects, passing vehicles on the correct side, taking jumps and landing in the marked zones.

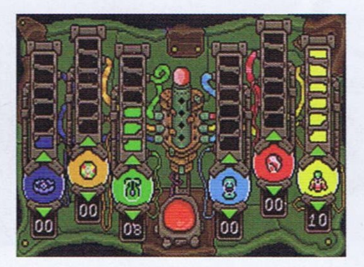
Like we said, there's some enjoyment to be had here – both are fine for a quick blast every now and again, and neither looks too shabby on the Micro's diminutive screen. If you can find the double pack pretty cheap, you could certainly buy a lot worse. **GE**

△ Left: *V-Rally* offers some basic racing fun. Right: *Stuntman* plays like Simon Says. Weird.



68







◁ Ah, the old 'fetch and carry' quests. Surely things can't get any more exciting.

INFO BURST

FROM	ZOO DIGITAL
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE LINK	NO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
COST	£25



JUKA AND THE MONOPHONIC MENACE

This is a bit of a strange one. It's an action-RPG of sorts, and it's clearly aimed at the younger gamer, which, while not necessarily being a bad thing, doesn't exactly do much to stimulate us. It's surprisingly well presented throughout, though, with sharp, garishly coloured environments and quaint little character designs. It also has a distinctly 16-bit feel to it, something that's accentuated by the jolly little tunes accompanying your adventure.

It's just a shame that it isn't particularly exciting to play. It has a very weird battle system that involves a combination of shield charging and potion mixing. Also, the whole potion-mixing process is a bit of a pain in the ass, if the truth be known. The kind of fetch and carry quests that the game quite often throws up are pretty unimaginative too.

Overall then, this is a worthy, entry-level adventure, but it's hardly going to give the likes of *Zelda* any sleepless nights. **GE**



55


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THE NINTENDO

Nintendo has spent the best part of two decades crossing out off with shock or excitement. Join us as we track the serrated

THOU SHALT NOT... ...show off chest skin.

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV
SUPER NINTENDO – MCMXCI (1991)

BMX XXX proved proper polygon femibumps are no problem for the Nintendo of the 21st century. But back in 1991, even nude *statues* gave The Big N the shakes. Gamers playing *Castlevania IV* in Japan could stare at naked granite ladypecs until they grew hairs on their palms, but for the US and UK versions, the maiden's modesty was completely covered up.

On the other hand: Nintendo batted zero eyelids at *Punch-Out!!*'s Super Macho Man and his biology-defying waggling of the breasts.

THOU SHALT NOT... ...bleed.

MORTAL KOMBAT
SUPER NINTENDO – MCMXCIII (1993)

Even your gran probably knows about Nintendo's infamous quest to make sure everyone's spines stayed distinctly un-ripped-out in *MK*... and the way Ninty painted blood grey to resemble sweat. You know, *grey sweat*. Blood was spilled, though – in the boardroom, when news filtered in that the uncensored Mega Drive version had smashed the SNES's face in.

On the other hand: Enemies in *Golgo 13: Top Secret Episode* simply had ketchup bottles taped to their chests. Obviously.

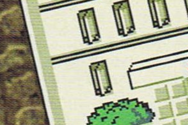
THOU SHALT NOT... ...use the red cross.



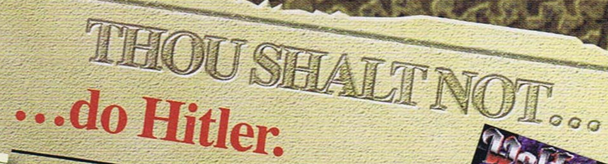
EARTHBOUND
NES – MCMLXXXIX (1989)

Clearly, the last thing you want to be doing as a company is associating yourself with an organisation set up to help the sick and injured. Nintendo stripped the symbol of the International Federation of the Red Cross off the hospital in *Earthbound* – religious overtones, apparently. Similarly, installing window frames is a sackable offence at Nintendo HQ.

On the other hand: *GoldenEye 007* had a big red crosshair smack bang in the middle of the screen. Big God advert ahoy!



THOU SHALT NOT... ...do Hitler.



WOLFENSTEIN 3D
SNES – MCMXCIV (1994)

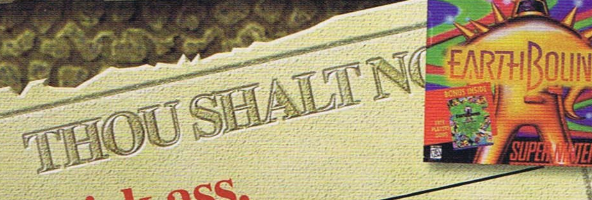
Don't mention the war. Or at least, don't mention Adolf "Sack My Barber Now" Hitler in Nintendo's presence. He was transformed into a cuddly, anonymous 'Staatmeister' during *Wolfenstein 3D*'s journey from PC to SNES. Worse, he and his Nazi cohorts were renamed as a boy band for the European *Bionic Commando* – 'Master D and the BADDs'.

On the other hand: Oddly, the EU *Bionic Commando* retained Hitler's face at the end – as well as the *exploding* Hitler's face.



COMMANDMENTS

the bits of games that risk making Mario's moustache fall edge left by The Big N's big pair of censoring scissors...



THOU SHALT NOT

...kick ass.

EARTHBOUND
NES – MCMLXXXIX (1989)

What's your punishment for staying out late and striking up a conversation with a big talking bee? According to the Japanese version of *Earthbound*, it's dad smacking your ass-cushions until sitting down is no longer an option. And in the West? Why, it's simply a good talking to and "no dessert for the rest of the decade". Oh, boo hoo.

・とーちゃんに どえらく どやされちまったよ。
・ああ おしりがいたい。

•My dad really got after me.
•He said I get no dessert for the rest of the decade...

On the other hand: Boss monkeys who slap their own butts in *Mega Man and Bass*. Erotic? Maybe that's just us.

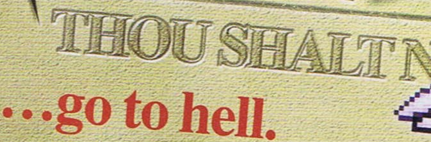
THOU SHALT NOT...

...cross reds.

PUNCH-OUT!!
NES – MCMLXXXVII (1987)

When Nintendo decides the time is right to offend an entire nation of 143 million people, it isn't too subtle about it, as *Punch-Out!!*'s Russian boxer Vodka Drunkenski proved. For the NES version, 'Vodka' was dragged down to the deed poll office and re-monikered as Soda Popinski. Even his bottle of 'pop' got a big red 'POP' label plastered across it. He *really* loves his pop, you see.

On the other hand: We bet Mario himself gets real Italian-Americans hot under the collar. "Mama Mia!" they must say.



THOU SHALT NOT

...go to hell.

SECRET OF MANA
SNES – MCMXCIII (1993)

THE HOLY WATER HAS SENT THE HELLHOUND BACK TO THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SPAWNED.

It's hard to know which is more ridiculous: *Secret of Mana*'s Hell Hound becoming a Heck Hound for the US version, or Nintendo missing the reference to Chunky Kong being "a hell of a guy" in *Donkey Kong 64*'s DK Rap and insisting on fixing it to "heck" in the *Super Smash Bros Melee* remix – a full two years later. This just in: it's the Heck Hound.

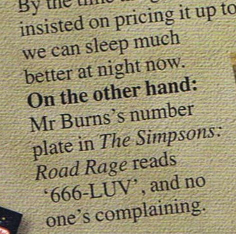
On the other hand: *Shadowgate* casually trotted past the censors, complete with three whole Hellhounds and one lot of 'Hell-spawned flames'. Dagnammit!

THOU SHALT NOT

...six things up.

PIKMIN 2
GAMECUBE – MMIV (2004)

What's the sound of one wrist slapping itself? Nintendo originally gave the sinister nightmare-causing dismembered doll's head in *Pikmin 2* a value of 666 Pokos – the *Pikmin* treasure of the beast! By the time the game reached Japan, though, the 'higher-ups' had insisted on pricing it up to 670 Pokos. Thanks – we can sleep much better at night now.



On the other hand: Mr Burns's number plate in *The Simpsons: Road Rage* reads '666-LUV', and no one's complaining.

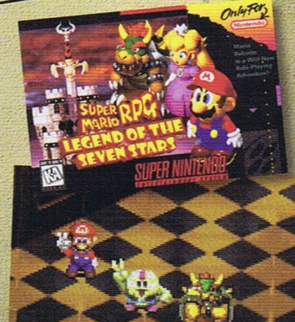
THE NINTENDO COMMANDMENTS

…or 'The Bits You Weren't Allowed To See'



THOU SHALT NOT… …do that 'arm' thing.

SUPER MARIO RPG
SNES – MCMXCVI (1996)



In Japan, it's not uncommon to see game characters giving an arm gesture that would ensure you *wouldn't* be invited back next week if you did it live on National Lottery Jetset. Nintendo US raised eyebrows when Bowser pulled off just such a gesture in *Super Mario RPG*: so in version USA, he does the universal sign language for 'Yay me!' instead. *Very* cool.

On the other hand: Mario's been giving people behind him the two-fingered salute for years now.

THOU SHALT NOT… …make grave mistakes.

TRIUMPH
NES – UNRELEASED (N/A)

Nintendo's battle with God continued – imagine, people might like Him more than Mario! In this unreleased version of Japanese battle/strategy oddity *Castle Quest*, dead warriors had to make do with cheapo tombstones on the battlefield instead of crosses. Even Disney weren't immune: the crosses on graves in *Ducktales* were out in favour of 'RIP'. Poor corpses.

On the other hand: Nintendo decided to do their own, better gods in *Ocarina of Time*. They glowed, see.



THOU SHALT NOT… …utter the G-word.

MARIO PARTY
NINTENDO 64 – MCMXCVIII (1998)

We bet Mario asterisks under his breath when he discovers Peach forgot to set the Bowser Alarm *again*. But he only said, "Oh my god!" once in the Japanese *Mario Party*, before Nintendo US soaped his mouth out. Even better: a car-punching minigame in *Final Fight* originally ended with the same phrase, but was censored on SNES to, "Oh my car!"

On the other hand: Behind the scenes, Miyamoto insists that his subordinates refer to him as 'Oh My God, Sir'.

THOU SHALT NOT… …do crime.

MIKE TYSON'S PUNCH-OUT!!
NES – MCMLXXXVII (1987)

The original arcade *Punch-Out!!* got by without a major celebrity. But then Nintendo slapped Mike Tyson's face all over the NES version – just before 'Iron Mike' became 'Iron Bars Mike' after some very unsavoury criminal convictions. Next thing you know, Mr Tyson's out and 'Mr Dream' is in. Hopefully not *those* kind of dreams, eh?

On the other hand: Wario was allowed to endorse *Super Mario Land*, even though he's really a rather unpleasant chap.



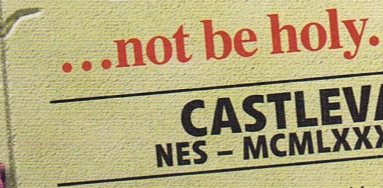
THOU SHALT NOT… …show dinosaurs urinating.

PRIMAL RAGE
SNES – MCMXCV (1995)



When you replace humans with dinosaurs in fighting games, anything can happen. Except, it seems, one dinosaur urinating on another. What could be more natural? Oh, wait – how about a velociraptor that claws open your own dino's chest, wrenches the still-beating heart out of the rib cage and then it eats it in front of you? Nope, that's just fine.

On the other hand: By the time *Conker* stumbled into view, urinating on game enemies had become an actual selling point.

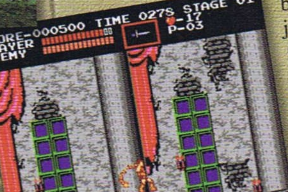


THOU SHALT NOT… …not be holy.

CASTLEVANIA
NES – MCMLXXXVI (1986)

Castlevania has always bubbled with religious undercurrents, but it's been a while since Nintendo cared enough to change "Holy water" to the much less controversial "Firebomb", or turn Belmont's crucifix-shaped projectile weapon into a boomerang (all the rage in Transylvania). They probably also wanted Dracula to give up on the maiden's blood and drink pineapple juice from a flask.

On the other hand: *Final Fantasy V* had Holy Water in floods – and it cures zombies! Somebody call Leon Kennedy…





THOU SHALT NOT...
...squash cute bunnies.

CRUIS'N USA
NINTENDO 64 – MCMXCVI (1996)

Racy games being censored? Sure. But racing games? The awful *Cruis'n USA* was a casserole of squashed dead bunny in the arcades, but on the N64, rabbit season was over. "[Nintendo] don't have any sense of humour," said *Cruis'n* creator Eugene Jarvis. "I don't know what's wrong with those people." What's wrong with *them*? 24%, Eugene. *24%.*

On the other hand: We shot a horse in the face in *Gun* last month, then rode another one so hard that it just dropped dead. Horses are funny.

THOU SHALT NOT...
...suck.

MANIAC MANSION
NES – MCMXC (1990)

Visit www.crockford.com/wrrrld/maniac.html and former Lucasarts employee Doug Crockford will guide you through the hilarious process of getting horror adventure *Maniac Mansion* safely through Nintendo's 1100m hurdle race of approvals.

The best bit? "Getting your pretty brains sucked out" made The Big N cry, but "brains removed" was just dandy.

On the other hand: In *Turok 2*, the Cerebral Bore showed dino bipeds getting their pretty brains sucked out in loving detail.



THOU SHALT NOT...
...hail the king.

DUKE NUKEM 64
NINTENDO 64 – MCMXCVII (1997)

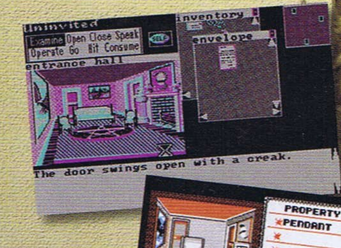
Having been thoroughly un-PC on the PC, the Duke of Swearoburgh had his dictionary of bad words thrown in the sin bin, his love of strippers cured, and his ability to 'save' slime-coated babes by shooting them in the face replaced with a nice sit down and a cup of tea (or at least a press of 'A'). Nintendo loves alien boars in pink dresses, mind.

On the other hand: Nintendo, about those severed bodies hanging by meat hooks through their heads...

THOU SHALT NOT...
...see stars.

UNINVITED
NES – MCMLXXXIX (1989)

Pagans believe that the five-pointed pentagram symbolises the harmony of life between the five core elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Which must be why Nintendo ripped it out of the text adventure *Uninvited*. This lesson clearly hadn't been learned a decade on: GBA *Doom* had is giant pentagrams erased with the Giant Pentagram Eraser.



On the other hand: Zombies with three-quarters of their face missing are fun for the whole family.



THOU SHALT NOT...
...kill.

PROBOTECTOR
NES – MCMXC (1990)

Not directly attributable to Nintendo, this, but we need someone to blame. *Contra*'s gun-happy humans, carefree about killing anyone so long as they obligingly lined up nicely in one of the eight compass directions, were deemed too violent for European tastes, and casually replaced with mechanical walk-o-bots. A nation's freezers looked on in horror.

On the other hand: Happy skeletons bleeding all over the screen in 1989's *Monster Party*, and a bloke smashing a dog's skull in with a baseball bat.

THOU SHALT NOT...
...be a devil.

MEGA MAN
NES – MCMLXXXVII (1987)

The devil's in the detail, and Nintendo's obsessive attention to it meant that *Mega Man*'s retiring 'Yellow Devil' struck mortal fear into US gamers' hearts with the terrifying new title of 'Rock Monster'. Again, it's a religious thing: Ninty didn't want mum and dad coming home to find little Johnny playing records backwards and worshipping a giant yellow snooker ball on legs. Like they would.

On the other hand: *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* had enough devils going on to make even Satan switch to *Barbie Horse Adventures* for a break.





Win battles, beat bosses and complete...

FIRE EMBLEM PATH OF RADIANCE

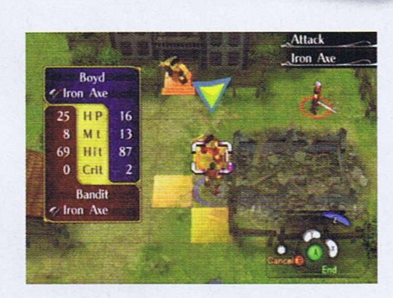




TACTICAL TIPS

WIN IN STYLE, WITH OUR COMPLETE PLAYING GUIDE

The stakes are higher than ever as the Fire Emblem series reaches Gamecube. Strategy gamers and rabid perfectionists will find hours of entertainment as they guide Ike and the Greil Mercenaries through stage after stage of rock-hard strategy gaming. We're here to show you the ropes.



CHAPTER 1: THE BATTLE BEGINS

Visit the first house for a Steel Sword, then send Boyd and Titania out to dispose of the axemen. Keep Oscar in reserve until the swordsmen come into his range, then have him take them out.

Zawana's a bit of a handful, but Titania can take him out in one turn with her Steel Axe. Don't use lesser characters against bosses – only your heavy hitters need apply here.

CHAPTER 2: RESCUE

Send Oscar to take out the swordsman to the north, then set up a defensive line, keep Rhys behind it, and just let the bandits come to you.

Once Oscar's free, bring him down to reinforce your fighters and swap off between him, Ike, and Boyd to exploit your enemies' weaknesses. Titania will arrive at the end of Turn 3. Form up on her and drive up the path towards Ikanau. He's not that tough, but he's more than a match for Ike or Boyd.

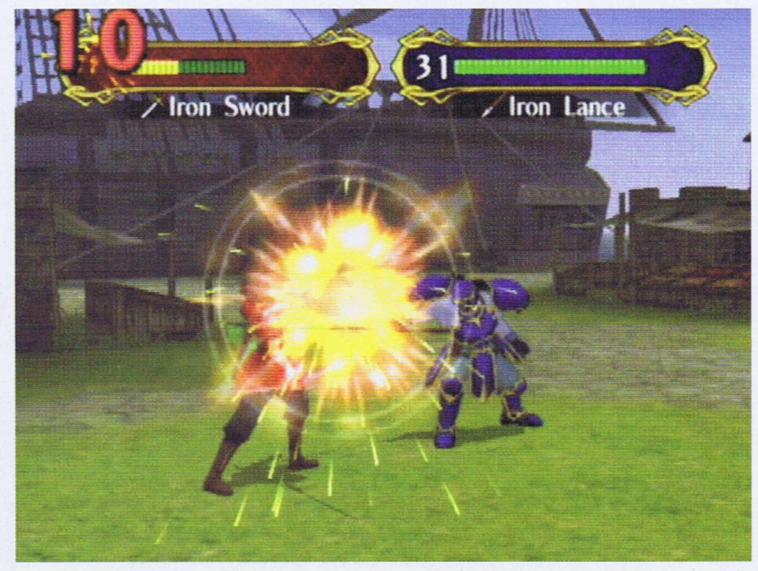
CHAPTER 3: PIRATES AGROUND

Visit the first house on the right for an Elixir, then mop up the pirates in town. Use Ike, Gatrie and Titania to set up a perimeter between the first two buildings and let them crash into it. Once the pirates in town have been dealt with, send Titania and Gatrie aboard the enemy ship to dispose of the last few axemen and their captain. At the end of Turn 5, Marcia will appear aboard the enemy ship. Make sure the pirates' archer is dead by then and send Ike to talk to her.

CHAPTER 4: ROADSIDE BATTLE

Move your characters into a wedge formation against the corner of the map, with Rhys, Shinon and Soren on the inside. This allows your warriors to take





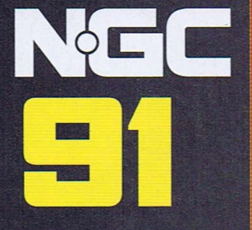
WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The first tactical role-playing game on the Gamecube proves to be a winner. The strategic combat combines with surprising depth and characters you get attached to for a totally engrossing and emotional experience.



WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 115

The dialogue is presented with lovely character portraits, while the cutscenes are truly sumptuous. Tough, engaging and even a little emotional, it's the perfect game for those long winter nights.



TIPS EXTRA

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

MARIO KART DS

DS

ALTERNATIVE ENDING SCREEN
Finish all classes with gold trophies on all cups (including Mirror mode).

ALTERNATIVE TITLE SCREEN
Finish all classes with gold trophies on all cups.

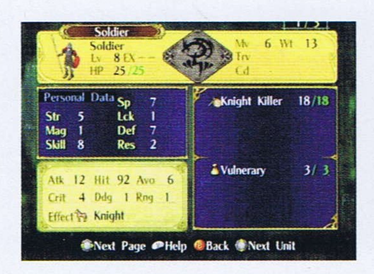
150CC MIRROR MODE
Finish 150cc Retro Class with gold trophies on every cup.

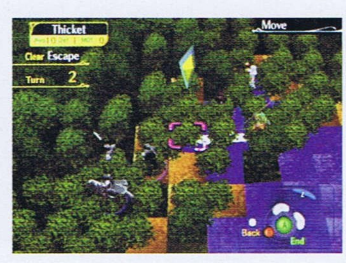
DAISY
Get a gold trophy on every cup in Retro Grand Prix on 50cc.

DRY BONES
Get a gold trophy on every cup in Nitro Grand Prix on 50cc.

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE

Win every battle and complete the game













the brunt of the enemy's offensive, without risking your more fragile characters. Keep Ike close to Rhys.

One of the final guards is wielding a Knight Killer, so keep Titania and Oscar away from him as you make your way towards Maijin. He's wielding a Javelin, allowing him to counterattack archers and mages. He's got excellent defence and more movement than you'd think, but he'll fold easily against an axeman.

CHAPTER 5: FLIGHT!

This is another map that'll be won or lost on the strength of your perimeter. Form a line with your fighters to deal with the incoming enemies from the south, with Soren and Shinon battling clean up. Only rearrange your troops to handle the right flank once the opponents in that area get close enough for it to matter.



CHAPTER 6: BRIEF DIVERSION

You could just barge right out of the forest and punch through the majority of the enemies there, but that'll involve you taking on most of their strongest fighters all at once. Instead, sneak over to the western bridge and let Titania and Boyd go out on point. This initial force is nothing special, but once you cross the bridge, Emil will order his men to rush you.

Make a wedge formation in the lower left-hand corner of the map and wait Emil's forces out. Emil and his bodyguards won't come after you until you come after them, so you've got some time to work with. Use Boyd and Soren to hold the bridge against the small residual force that'll come through the forest, while Ike, Titania and Oscar can be used to dispatch the bulk of the enemy.

CHAPTER 7: SHADES OF EVIL

You can defeat certain enemies on this map to get Chest Keys, which can be used – get this – to open treasure chests.

From your starting position, head up and into the treasure room. This makes it easy for Mia to reach Ike, and its two narrow points of entry make it excellent for withstanding the initial rush of enemies. The chest contains an Armorslayer. Shinon and Gatrie arrive on the second turn. Send them into the closest treasure room (the chests here contain a Ward Staff and a Miracle) and have Gatrie bar the doorway.

Once you've cleaned out the enemies within the castle itself, drive up the middle to dispose of Petrine's rearguard.



CHAPTER 8: DESPAIR AND HOPE

Titania can hold your east flank by herself. Bring Oscar down to watch the southern entrance and use Ike, Boyd and Mia to hold the western doorway. This has the benefit of putting Ike in a position to talk to Ilyana, and you could really use her help. Soren can range back and forth within the courtyard, dropping Wind spells as needed.

This is a purely defensive scenario, so don't pursue your opponents outside of this central courtyard.





WALUIGI
Get a gold trophy on every cup in Retro Grand Prix on 100cc.

THIRD KART FOR EVERY CHARACTER
Get a gold trophy on every cup in Nitro Grand Prix on 100cc.

CHOOSE FROM 7 KARTS
Get a gold trophy in every cup in Nitro Grand Prix on 150cc.

CHOOSE FROM ANY KART
Get a gold trophy in every cup in Grand Prix mode on 150cc mirror.

UNLOCK MISSION 7
Get at least a 1-star ranking on all levels of every mission in Mission Levels 1-6.

UNLOCK R.O.B. AS A RACER
Get gold trophies on all cups in 150cc Mirror Mode.



CHAPTER 9: GALLIA

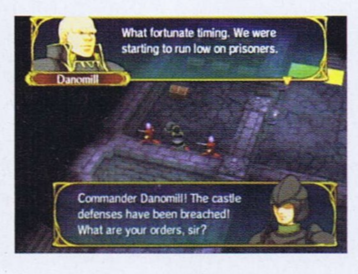
This might have been difficult if you didn't have Lethe and Mordecai in tow, but when they're in Beast form, they're a match for anything on the map.

A couple of pirates will enter the fray from the north on Turn 4. If they aren't stopped, they'll wreck the houses to the northwest. If you can get there before they do, which is best done as a commando mission for Titania, the inhabitants will give you a Restore Staff and a Talisman.

If you spoke to Marcia in Chapter Three, she'll show up at the end of the third turn, and she'll then make her way over towards Ike.

CHAPTER 10: PRISONER RELEASE

Now's a good time to trade in all your weakened iron weapons for fresh steel. Go ahead and pay Volke unless you're seriously underfunded. He'll come in handy if you're trying to avoid detection – if you end your turn with a character in an enemy's line of sight, he'll summon reinforcements from all three open doors. You'll get a lot of bonus exp if you can do this stealthily, although it's also rewarding to fight your way through.



You'll be able to raid Danomill's treasure room in the northwest corner. Danomill himself is a powerful but slow swordsman. He's carrying a valuable Master Seal and his chests contain a Steel Lance, Counter, Short Axe and Javelin. There's also a Statue Fragment to be found inside the smaller treasure room to the northeast.

You can have Ike speak to Nephenee, Brom and Sephiran, but you'll only recruit the former two. Oscar can speak to Keiran to recruit him.

CHAPTER 11: BLOOD RUNS RED

You're surrounded when this fight starts. Retreat to the west, dispatching the lancemen around you and shielding your spellcasters.

Visit the house in the southwest corner of the map for a Dracoshield, the house in the centre of the map for an Elwind book and the northwestern house for a Killer Lance. Note that only human characters will get items.

Jill will arrive at the end of the fourth turn. She won't come after you, thankfully, so make sure you're well away from the southeast corner of the map. Most importantly, the Black Knight is waiting inside the cottage in the centre of the map. He'll enter play roughly two turns after you begin battle with Macavoy.



None of your characters can hope to do so much as slow the Black Knight down, so you need to run away. Make sure you're well out of his range before you get into a fight with Macavoy and you should be fine.

CHAPTER 12: A STRANGE LAND

The key to this fight is positioning. Take eight sturdy warrior types and cluster them up around Rolf and Soren. When the Laguz swoop down to start something, counter attack with wind magic and some well-placed arrows. Just stay in formation and let them come to you.

Once you survive two turns of this, Jill will appear and make her way towards Ike. She's actually really good on this map, mostly because of her Laguzguard item, so you don't have to worry about her too much.

CHAPTER 13: A GUIDING WIND

This'll get a little chaotic. Bring a thief to help open the chests on deck. You'll have plenty of backup from AI-controlled allies, and you can stop most of the enemy's incursions by positioning high-defence characters like Brom on the boarding ramps, with mages or archers behind them to help whittle down the opposition.

You should also be sure to park someone powerful like Ike or Titania on the square you're guarding to make sure stray Laguz don't fly in while you aren't looking.

Around Turn 6, four more bird Laguz will appear and they'll try to steal the contents of the chests. It may be easier to let them do this and then take them





TIPS EXTRA CONTINUED...

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE

Gamecube

FIRE EMBLEM: THE SACRED STONES ILLUSTRATIONS
Put *Sacred Stones* in your GBA and connect it with your Gamecube.

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE ILLUSTRATIONS
Complete the game

UNLOCK SOUND ROOM AND THEATRE
Complete Story mode.

OCCULT SCROLLS
These supply characters with certain skills, depending on their class. You'll find them here:

Occult Scroll 1
Chapter 13: The top-left chest.

Occult Scroll 2
Chapter 16: Talk to Stefan on the info at Base.

Occult Scroll 3
Chapter 21: Recruit Tauroneo or steal it from him.

Occult Scroll 4
Chapter 27: Beat the boss.



out before they can escape. The chests on the middle ship contain a Killer Bow, Elfire book, Longsword and a Laguz Axe. The far ship's chests hold the valuable Occult item, an Energy Drop and a Speedwing.

CHAPTER 14: TRAINING

This isn't hard at all. Visit the house near the start for Spirit Dust, then send someone out to kill the men to the east and west. Thus freed from distractions, you can hold the bridge ahead of you against Gashilama's main force.

Once you've worn through most of Gashilama's minions, he'll call on a couple of feral ones to deal with you. They count as Laguz, so anti-Laguz equipment will work well on them. Visit the houses to the northwest for a Vantage and a Secret Book.

CHAPTER 15: THE FERAL FRONTIER

The sand will slow most of your characters down. Lethe, Mordecai, Jill, Marcia, Soren, Rolf and/or Ilyana will be carrying most of the mail on this stage, since their movement





is unimpaired. Horsemen will be practically crippled, and bringing someone like Brom is an almost laughable concept.

You'll get bonus exp at the end of this map based upon how much of the opposing force is still alive when you beat the boss. This isn't as hard as it sounds because they continually transform back and forth from Laguz to human. Make your move when most of them are human.

CHAPTER 16: ATONEMENT

Bring a thief for this map. You can use him to open the chests and doors in the area, thus acquiring a host of riches. The treasure rooms to the east and west hold, in crude order, an Ashera Icon, Silver Lance, Bolting and Physic Staff. The central treasure room hosts a Full Guard item (which is valuable for Pegasus riders) and a Dracoshield. Send Laguz characters out





ahead to clear away the opposition, then send your characters racing away from your entry point.

At the ends of Turn 6 and 7, two more spearmen will appear from the southern door, and they can wreak havoc on your spellcasters. At the end of Turn 8, a thief will enter from the west and break into the western treasure room. If he gets the chests there, you'll miss the Physic Staff.

The two entrances to the main hall where the boss is hiding are natural and useful chokepoints. You can set up a perimeter there to lure most of his entourage into your grasp, then dispatch his guardian mages and close in. He's packing a powerful spear, so shuck him like a lobster with a hammer.

CHAPTER 17: DAY BREAKS

This is broken into four stages. After you clear each one, your surviving characters will be restored to full health and you'll have the option to call for two characters as reinforcements. If that should become necessary, they'll appear on the third turn.

Stage ONE

Move forward as a phalanx and dispose of the Venin Axe-wielding soldiers in the brush. At the end of Turn 3, three swordsmen will appear behind you, one of whom is wielding a Killing Edge. Be aware that they'll appear and have powerful lancemen like Oscar in place to dispose of them. If you don't, they can mow down your spellcasters before you know it.

Stage TWO

Most of the most powerful resistance you'll face will come from the west. Equip a few warriors with anti-cavalry weapons such as Longswords or Poleaxes and set them up to block enemy incursions, then send a couple of Laguz through the swampland to make a run on the Arrive square.

Stage THREE

Try to move west. You'll wind up with an enemy spawn point behind your lines, but opponents will only appear two at a time. This also forces the bulk of the opposing force to come after you via a narrow, easily blockaded path. Once you've taken care of the enemies around your starting point, this becomes much easier.

Stage FOUR

Hopefully you managed to get a Bolting scroll in Chapter 16. Have Ilyana use it to roast the meteor-tossing mage in the treeline to the west, then move out to the south and block the passage through the swamplands.

Around the end of Turn 3, Tibarn and his crew will appear and start messing Oliver's whole world up. You can pretty much let them take care of business here. Just make sure you keep Titania or Oscar by them in case they get into trouble, but the standard enemies can't touch them. This frees you up to secure a perimeter on your rear flank to dispose of the quartet of mounted



archers who'll come in from the north, right behind you, at the end of Turn 4. Use some of your A-list talent to knock the archers out before they can cause too much damage.

CHAPTER 18: CRIMEA MARCHES

The fort's both helpful and unhelpful. It'll keep wyvern riders from coming in at a bad time, but you'll need to watch your rear flank. Not only will the riders come in after you, but so will two separate small groups: one of mounted spearmen,and another of spearmen and an archer. You'll wind up either taking casualties or fighting a war on two fronts at the same time.

Send an advance group of high-Res fighters like Paladins and Falcon Knights ahead through the fort to take care of the local mage population. Once they've done that, bring up an archer to dispose of the crow Laguz who'll be sneaking in via the back road.

A thief will be able to steal Recover and Silence Staffs, as well as a Wrath item, from the chests here.

CHAPTER 19: ENTRUSTED

This is one of the tougher battles in the game, mostly thanks to Naesala. He's one of the harder opponents that you have to face.

You can get him to go away if you have Rayson and Ulki or Janaff with you. Get one of the hawks to Naesala. The easiest way to do this is to creep forward until Naesala starts coming after your troops and hope



SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

Gamecube

EXPERT MODE
Get 71 A rankings.

LAST STORY
Beat every 6th stage in Story mode.

HIDDEN VEHICLES

Air Saucer
Find the five keys in Lava Shelter.

Air Saucer
Find the five keys in Central City.

Air Saucer
Find the five keys in Air Fleet.

Armoured car
Find the five keys in Westopolis.

Black Arm's Vehicle
Find the five keys in Glyphic Canyon.

Black Arms' Vehicle
Find the five keys in Sky Troops.

GUN Vehicle
Find the five keys in Lost Impact.

Military Vehicle
Find the five keys in GUN Fortress.

TANK CANNON
Find the five keys in Prison Island.

TANK CANNON
Find the five keys in Iron Jungle.

WARP HOLE
Find the five keys in Digital Circuit.

he hits someone who can handle the punishment, such as Titania. Have Ulki or Janaff talk to Naesala and he'll go and talk to Rayson. He'll then leave the field of play, allowing you to mop up a relatively inoffensive batch of human mercenaries with ease.

Note that if you can get Naesala to leave the battle without killing any of the crow Laguz, he'll give you a potent Knight Ring item.

CHAPTER 20: DEFENDING TALREGA

If Jill gets near this stage's boss, she'll defect to the other side.

You have a time limit on this stage, but let's be honest, how often have you needed 15 turns to do anything? Your bigger problem is the mage with Blizzard who's playing sniper. If you've got long-range spells like Bolting, use them to nail him. Otherwise, you'll need to send a high-res unit like Titania after him to punch his ticket.

Don't get forced into hurrying through this level. Instead, just make all of your shots count – clear out the valley before you move on to face the boss. This isn't a great level to bring along a couple of newbies so you can level them up. Make sure you just bring your heavy hitters instead.

You can visit the houses here to get Smite and Provoke items.

CHAPTER 21: WITHOUT A KING

This would be a relatively unremarkable castle map if not for some of the tools carried by the enemy. The sub-boss, Kasatai, is packing a deadly Brave Lance that may allow him to attack four times in a round, and a couple of bishops are carrying Sleep Staves. If you're going to attack any of them at all, take them down hard. Ena, the boss, is tricky to defeat with conventional weapons, but a few shots of Thunder magic will do it.

As usual on a castle map, you'll want to get on with some recreational burglary. You can pick up an Energy Drop, Stiletto, two Parities, two Brave Swords and a much-needed Master Seal while you're here.

Ike can talk to General Tauroneo to recruit him. He's a powerful character, but more importantly, he's carrying one of the rare Occult items that will teach a character a unique, class-determined skill.

CHAPTER 22: SOLO

Don't panic – all of those priests are pretty low-level and you can carve them up without any real problems. Alternatively, if you can get through this without killing any of them, you'll clean up on bonus EXP. This involves shoving them around a lot.

Navigating the priests forms the real challenge of the level. Most of the actual enemies are mages or feral ones, so they're dangerous but have very obvious weaknesses. The boss shouldn't present any real problems.

When you reach the central corridor, or when you hit Turn 10, two sages and two feral ones will appear from the southeastern door.

The chests on this stage contain a Bolganone, a Tomahawk, a Silver Bow, Spirit Dust, a Nosferatu book and a Sleep Staff.

CHAPTER 23: THE GREAT BRIDGE

Don't bring any flying units onto this map or they'll get torn apart by Ballistae. On top of that, several points on the map are booby trapped, briefly paralysing a stricken character and preventing other characters from moving past him.

Send a few high-defence units ahead of the rest of your group to clear the way for the rest of your crew. This lets you set up a solid rear flank to deal with the enemy reinforcements that'll arrive from behind you.

Once you've dealt with her troops, it's time for a showdown with Petrine. Like Tanith's Sonic Sword, Petrine's Flame Lance deals magic damage. Use Pure Water to help offset its offensive power before closing to melée.

CHAPTER 24: BATTLE REUNION

Move out as a group and capture the northern bridge. The best way to succeed on this map seems to be to meet Geoffrey's forces half way, catching the enemies between you in a pincer manoeuvre.

The biggest problem you'll face will come from the Ballistae scattered throughout the battlefield. It's not a bad idea to throw Rolf and Shinon onto a couple of high-Def units, then have them ride out to dispatch the Ballistae's operators and capture them. This'll help you whittle away at the enemy with relative ease, as well as clear a path for someone to reach the Arrival square.

Be sure to visit the houses in the northeast and southwest as you'll be able to collect Savior and Nihil items.

CHAPTER 25: STRANGE LANDS

This is another stage where your best characters are suddenly liabilities. Fliers will get nailed by the Ballistae, while horsemen are crippled by low movement rates. Try to stick with Laguz units like Mordecai or Lethe, and spread your troops out so the boulders don't take too great a toll on them. Sending them up the hill in two groups, each equipped with a healer and plenty of Vulneraries, will help prevent any unnecessary fatalities.

The boss of this level is wielding a Bolt Axe, so avoid taking him on with any unit that has a low magic resistance. A few wind spells will usually take him out relatively easily.

CHAPTER 26: CLASH

You'll have to drag Elincia along for this battle. She's a healer, but it's still hard to keep her alive at times.

With 19 units to play with, you've got a lot of leeway to experiment with different play styles. Moving as a phalanx, however, is the single best way to get through this level because you're outnumbered at every turn.

Move forward a bit at a time, sending out transformed Laguz and paladins as outrunners. Bait enemies into attacking you – this won't be hard, since everyone on this map loves to rush you down – then drop them as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 27: MOMENT OF FATE

The majority of this battle is a fairly standard Arrive map. The real trick comes when you need to take on the Black Knight.

The key to beating him is to drastically and unrepentantly overlevel Ike, and to use an Occult scroll to teach him the Aether skill. He'll pick up a nifty sword, which will help, and it's a good idea to have Mist equipped with a Sleep Staff. Keep Ike healthy and use the Sleep Staff to stop his reinforcements from healing you.

One way or another, you need to either survive five turns of battle or beat the knight before then. If you beat him, Nasir will join you; if you don't, you'll have to deal with Ena.

CHAPTER 28: THE TWISTED TOWER

You could sit back and let Tibarn do this on his own – he can't be stopped by conventional weaponry. If you feel as though you absolutely must help him, stock up on anti-Laguz weapons and let rip – you'll be up against crows,



UNLOCKABLE WEAPONS

Egg Vacuum
Beat the neutral story.

Heal Gun
Beat the pure good side.

Omochao Gun
Beat the slightly good side.

Samurai Sword
Beat the pure evil side.

Satellite Lazer
Beat the bad side.

Shadow rifle
Beat the last story.

GUN
Gamecube

.69 FERGUSON RIFLE
Defeat Hollister.

MAGRUDER'S NOCK GUN
Complete the game.

REED'S ARMOURED HORSE AND UPGRADED NOCK GUN
Complete the game and every side quest.

APACHE SHIRT
Complete all of the Hunting missions.

beasts and dragons here. They're all high level and you'll have to worry about several waves of reinforcements, but Tibarn tips the odds rather dramatically in your favour.

Incidentally, watch Heddwyn. He's carrying Bolting, which can ruin your whole day if you leave a low-res character in its line of fire.

ENDGAME: REPATRIATION

This is it, then – the final battle. Buy custom Silver weapons for all your best warriors, refresh each of your spellcasters' items, stock up on Vulneraries, and spend all the money you need to spend.

Form up a perimeter on the southeast corner of the map and let the enemy come to you. You've got a lot of Laguz and a few dragons coming at you, so your best bet is to control the field of battle. Thunder magic works well against the dragons, and by now, after all the Beorc you've taken out, you should have enough anti-Laguz weaponry to kill… well, an army of the things. If you're having trouble, call in Tiburn for reinforcements.

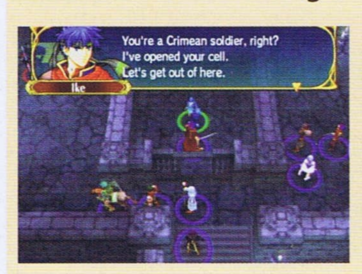
Once you've dispatched his troops, it's time to take on the final boss. Just as with the Black Knight, you'll want Ike to walk in there with Aether and wreck the shop. You'll usually be doing only a little more damage than the boss is capable of healing each round… unless Aether kicks in. Either way, he'll counterattack for a ton of damage, so have a healer on deck with a Physic or Mend Staff to put Ike back together.

Like a lot of his predecessors, the boss won't attack a character unless the character's within his immediate range, so don't worry too much about your spellcasters. Just keep attacking and healing until he goes down.



OPTIONAL CHARACTER RECRUITMENT

There are a number of characters who you must go out of your way to recruit over the course of the game if you want to stand any chance of success…







Ilyana: She'll be among the soldiers on your left flank during Chapter 8. Have Ike talk to her.

Marcia: If Ike speaks to Marcia aboard the pirate ship in Chapter Three, she'll appear to join your group during Chapter 9.

Brom, Nephenee: Have Ike speak to them during Chapter 10.

Kieran: Have Oscar speak to him during Chapter 10.

Zihark: If you get either Mordecai or Lethe within Zihark's movement range during Chapter 11, he'll run up to them and immediately join your group.



Jill: Make sure you don't kill Jill in Chapter 11 and she'll show up to join you during Chapter 12.

Sothe: You can recruit him in one of your Info conversations before the battle in Chapter 12.

Gatrie: Once Astrid is on your side, have her talk to him during Chapter 13.

Stefan: In Chapter 15, take a Laguz character in the northeast corner of the map and walk around until Stefan appears. A human will just get Stefan's sword.

Astrid: Have Ike talk to her during Chapter 13.

Devdan: Speak to him during Chapter 16 with one of the children who's in your army, such as Rolf, Mist or Tormod.

Reyson: Opt to accept his help in Chapter 18.

Shinon: Have Rolf speak to him during Chapter 18, then defeat him with Ike.

Haar: Send Jill to speak with him during Chapter 23.



Geoffrey: If he survives Chapter 24, he'll join you after the fight.

Largo: You can hire him during one of the conversations in your base that take place before Chapter 25.

Makalov: Send Marcia to talk to him in Chapter 14.

CAVALRY SWORD
Defeat Reed.

DUAL PEACEMAKERS
Defeat Hoodoo Brown.

REED'S ARMORED HORSE AND MAGRUDER'S CANNON SHOTGUN
Complete Story mode and every side quest, then go to Magruder Mine to pick up your rewards.

SILVER SPURS
Complete all of the Pony Express missions.



THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's biggest games.

The Royal Family

This month… the Prince of Persia is back, with motion that's as smooth as silk trousers. He's a very influential man in the videogaming world…



△ *Prince of Persia* offered silky smooth leaping, running and big-spike-up-the-bum action.



△ Mechanical gates in trees? It can only be the sublime French weirdness of *Flashback*.

KARATEKA (NES, 1985)
Early brainwave from Jordan "*Prince of Persia*" Mechner, with the slick animation skills and choreographed sword-fighting that would become *PoP*'s trademark. Plus an obsession with cute Arabian princesses in nightdresses. In prison.

PRINCE OF PERSIA (NES, 1992)
Mechner called it "rotoscoping", which sounds a lot fancier than "filming my brother prancing about in pyjamas and plotting the resulting animation into the game". *PoP*'s acrobatic prince and unique platform/puzzling shake-up made it a real Turkish delight.

FLASHBACK (SNES, 1993)
Having blown socks off with *Another World*, French magic house Delphine 'borrowed' *PoP*'s feel again in 1993. But we were 900 years after Persia here, for an atmospheric near-future adventure of real class.

Flashback's plot was a twisty one – it even took a while before the amnesiac hero helpfully remembered he'd had his memory erased. That left you to explore a juicily lush jungle of the future – all trees and vines and wandering death-robots – in a manner that suggested hero Conrad Black and Mr Prince O. Persia had been to the same lessons at videogame school. Plus, you had to figure out why a) strange alien cavemen types wanted you dead and b) who decided to put all these sliding metal doors halfway along tree trunks.

Like all the games to emerge from Delphine's magic fingers, *Flashback* was awash with atmosphere. It was an almost wordless adventure that managed to build a hackneyed Blade Runner-esque underground city – complete with a deadly TV gameshow studio sitting on top – without once seeming silly. And it was tough, too: we're pretty sure we never actually completed it, forever cursed to die at the hands of gun-proof globs on the alien's homeworld.

Flashback's closest modern day relative is probably *Beyond Good and Evil* – both share that strange Gallic charm, and a pretty bizarre vision of the future where there's equal room for wood and metal.

ODDWORLD ADVENTURES (GB, 1998)
Back in the day, Abe, the fart-liable Mukon runt, was spoken of in the same breath as digital legends like Mario and Lara Croft. Able to boss peers about with adorable speech ("Over here!", "Follow me!"), Abe had cut and pasted from *PoP*'s book for his run-jump-dead adventures.

TOMB RAIDER (GBC, 2000)
Prince of Persia biggest, bounciest baby. Lara might have been able to somersault saucily up onto a big block in a way that would definitely have been illegal in 12th-century Persia, but she learnt pretty much everything she knew from Mechner Jr in his baggy pyjamas.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1011

RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.



NEX-T!

Generation NEX, the new bit of plastic from Messiah Entertainment that plays your old NES games, was supposed to be Bringing Gaming Back To Life™. And it reportedly does… if you mean shambling, jaw-hanging, groaning zombie-style life. Certain NES carts aren't compatible, and those that are have iffy colours and sound issues. "It would have been more appropriately named Generation SUX," said one dissatisfied customer, cleverly.

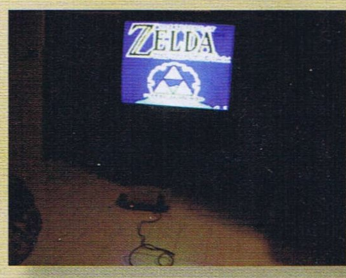
MICRO MEMORIES

In Japan, Nintendo made a NES-themed Game Boy Micro the centrepiece of its flag-waving *Super Mario Bros* 20th birthday celebrations. Now the US has joined in the party too. By the time you read this, the 20th Anniversary Edition Game Boy Micro will be sitting in US stores next to the other 73 different types of Game Boys. You'll be able to recognise the new one thanks to its maroon and gold faceplate, which was apparently "inspired by" Nintendo's first home console. We reckon there's a good chance the 20AEGBM (as we definitely won't be calling it) will be paddling across to UK island before you know it.



RPG STORY

This is a rather funny story. A bloke buys a mysterious prototype version of an unreleased sequel to the second NES *Zelda* game for $20 (£11). He then puts it on eBay for $5 (£3), along with a post of a fairly unconvincing screenshot of the title screen in order to placate sceptical eBayers. The cart is bought by a man claiming to work for Silicon Knights. However, the boss of Silicon Knights suggests that this is rubbish. Finally, the original seller starts touting T-shirts on the site: "I was bidding on the *Zelda III* prototype and all I got was this lousy T-shirt." Funny story.



NET TENDO

Bassed out



Jean Baudin is a well-known name in the bass world for his work with Nuclear Rabbit (the band, not an atomic bunny). He's not so big that he doesn't remember the little people, though. Specifically, little fat plumbers. His video of the *Super Mario Bros* theme played on a nine-string bass guitar (and a Pac Man-themed bass guitar at that) flew around the net this month, and means that the only instruments yet to be used to play Koji Kondo's 1983 masterwork are the saxophone, the Slovenian klopotec, and a comb with a bit of paper wrapped around it.
■ www.jeanbaudin.com

Cart-ography



Retro gaming is getting bigger – quite literally. Alexander Bisler gazed thoughtfully at the many supersized LCD monitors he's got access to at the office and realised that they could be put to better use than boring old work rubbish. That's why they now display maps from old games like *Zelda: A Link to the Past*, stitched together from screenshots and shown at 6,000 x 3,000 resolution (six times your average monitor). And if you look very closely, you can even make out the silhouetted figure of Alexander himself, lording it over Hyrule like Ganondorf himself.
■ www.ianalbert.com/misc/mapphotos.php

FIVE Things

Mad and plain bad gamepad replacements from yesteryear



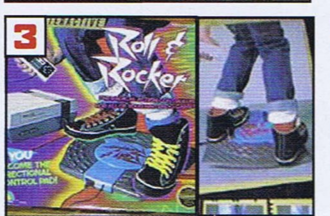
1 POWERGLOVE

A truly preposterous control mitten that's most famous for its appearance in Nintendo advermovie *The Wizard*. "I love the PowerGlove – it's so bad," said the guy who was wearing it. That's oldspeak from the 80s, kids.



2 U-FORCE

The big selling point of this device was that it could detect the position of your fists. Great for *Punch-Out!!* but not so good for precisely bouncing on three Goombas while dodging a Bullet Bill. And it broke if you actually punched it.



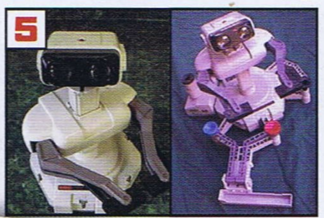
3 ROLL N' ROCKER

"YOU become the directional control pad!" screamed the box to this tilting platform in a very excitable fashion. It's every kid's ambition come true! Mismatched laces are optional, while only those who weigh under 45kg need apply.



4 LASERSCOPE

Made especially for the game *Duck Hunt*. Simply don the headset of the future and scream "Fire!" into the microphone to make ducks dead. At least until the fire brigade comes running for the fifth time.



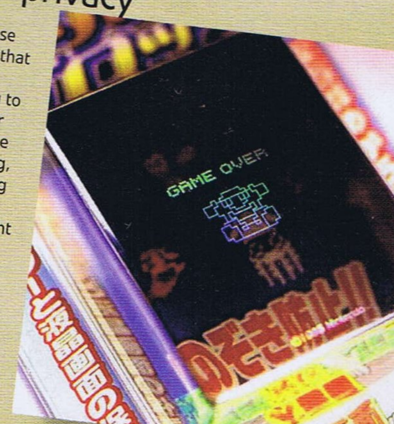
5 ROB THE ROBOT

Plastic tat originally packaged with the NES. It was only 'good' for picking up plastic discs and is scientifically proven to break if stamped on in anger and/or frustration. Officially only 1/185th as cool as he looked.

RETRO TAT

Mazza protects your privacy

Videogame weblog Kotaku uncovered these superb Mario-themed 'Mail Block' screens that slot over your mobile's screen and display *Super Mario Bros* images for anyone trying to look over your shoulder on the bus, train or air balloon. Three Mario moments are 'Game Over', jumping towards the end-of-level flag, and a multiple-life-bagging, Koopa-stomping moment that's going to have anyone under 20 wondering what we're going on about. Tht rox da bmb!



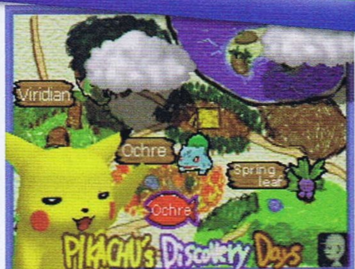
WRITE IN!

Have you found something that's turned old Nintendo stuff into a new money-spinning gift? Tell us and we'll name and shame it in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk

THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

This month, five years ago – **N64 Magazine, January 2001**


N64 NINTENDO 64! • GAME BOY! • GAMECUBE!
The UK's best-selling independent Ninte...
FEATURING Nintendo World
N64 MAGAZINE
HEY YOU, PIKACHU!
MICKEY'S SPEEDWAY
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH
WCW NO MERCY
PLUS! planet GAME BOY
POKÉMON TRADING CARD GAME
50th ISSUE
Join the party inside!
200 prizes to be won!
LOOK! FLIP UP YOUR FREE MAJORA'S MASK GUIDE FOR MORE GIDDYING GAMES!
50



△ Every creature in the game smiled. And smiled. And smiled. We were scared.



△ You could shout at Pikachu until your throat felt like you'd been gargling weasels, but he'd still ignore everything you said.

GAME OF THE MONTH
HEY YOU, PIKACHU!
NINTENDO 64

Surreal creature-caring sim with mushrooms and not much else…

WHAT'S THIS? An adopt-an-electric-rat sim that basically amounts to an early *Nintendogs*. Plug in the included microphone and teach the stubborn mascot to ignore everything you say.

THE BIG DEAL: Testing game elements that reappeared in everything from *Pokémon Channel* to *Mario Party 6*, *Hey You, Pikachu!* had a stressed Geraint screeching, "Don't eat the effing mushroom!", while Pikachu happily ate the mushroom. Dodgy voice recognition was just one of *Hey You, Pikachu!*'s faults: a criminal lack of things to do and a featureless world of unnervingly smiling monsters helped earn it just 56% from a fuming Evans.

THE OFFICIAL LINE: "English Language Voice Recognition Unit! Talk to Pikachu! (Recommended for kids 12 and under)"

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? *Hey You, Pikachu!* only got as far as the US, so we never got to find out how Europe would react to stubborn-eared Pika. We did get to see what UK people thought of a Pikachu-themed N64 where his foot was used as the reset button. Not much, basically.

AND: Your reward for sticking with Pika was either an electric Pika-shock in the chest, or a static screen showing Ash's mum cooking onion stew. Wow!



Everyone was playing...

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
NINTENDO 64



△ Link looked better than ever in this fantastic mask-based romp.



△ Great characters, great story, great fun – this game had it all.

Every Zelda game is sublime, but Greener reckons this was the finest title in the series. The rest of us disagree!

The choking sound quality of the *Majora's Mask* remake on *Wind Waker*'s bonus disc defiled the memory of a game that was made to be loved. It boasted a more gripping plot than *Ocarina of Time*, a superb mask-wearing conceit – crashing around Termina Field as a rolled-up Goron was more fun than Christmas – and some staggering bosses (except for the last one, annoyingly). The time-limited aspect could be frustrating – an extra save game option was thrown into the US and European versions as a result – but, all told, I'm prepared to argue that this is the best *Zelda* ever. Until someone listens.

OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

Mickey's Speedway USA
Surprisingly decent *Mario Kart* clone.
80%

Midway's Greatest Arcade Hits
Yep, they were trotting out the retro remakes even then.
71%

Ogre Battle 64
Superb takey-turny strategy epic that was befuddlingly Japanese.
84%

Worst game...

CRUIS'N EXOTICA
NINTENDO 64





Cruis'n was the racing series that refused to die gracefully, 'treating' us to year upon year of racing so unpleasant to the taste that even our dog wouldn't go near it – and our dog loves racing games. *Exotica* was the third in the series, bringing us the requisite amount of obscene scenery pop-up, rival drivers with all the brains of a monkey sellotaped to a tricycle, and a track set in the Lost City of Atlantis, where "giant sharks magically appear out of nowhere about 30cm in front of your bonnet".

Fresh-faced *N64* newcomer Geraint begrudgingly awarded it 43 percentage points for at least getting rid of the prequel's fog.

Other news...

Old news, tastefully repackaged



50 SENSE

N64 Magazine hit its 50th issue, and some familiar (if increasingly craggy) faces were wheeled out to reminisce about a mag then just four years young. We also gave away every last bit of tat we could find hiding under the piles of Andrea's old broken sticks. If you won, we're very, very sorry

RHYME, BUT NO REASON

If you thought Des Lynam in a glass box (or whatever it was) was a bad marketing idea, you should have seen Nintendo's rabble-rousing marketing poem for Christmas 2000. "Twas the month before Christmas and all through the nation/Gamers gave up on that brand new PlayStation..." And so on. For two whole pages.



MAIL CALL

N64 Magazine's increasingly unhinged readership a) told us that they were "so deeply in love with Link I want to kiss him", b) somehow created a Pokémon picture from a piece of wood and a magnifying glass, and c) wondered naively who this 'Ed' character was. Bless.



Bring back the memories
– or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART
HAMMERIN HARRY: NES (1992)

The Irem Corporation is best-known for *R-Type*. Now you know why. Unlike Harry, we wouldn't let an artist set up his easel at that particular spot, especially when it provides clear evidence that having a girl's torso isn't the only feminine characteristic HH has to offer. Also note that our Sylvester Stallone wannabe has developed a reputation for quality carpentry, despite taking a wooden hammer to a set of iron girders, and actually lining his thumb up for a hammerin'. So bad, the bloke on the right is trying to escape onto a better box.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE
PANG: GAME BOY (1993)

The idea of full-blown cutscenes was still the stuff of a madman's dreams back in 1993, but Hudson's Pang took a step in the right direction, giving you a quick glimpse of the game's hero between levels. When did games stop being so happy? Answer: a few button-presses later, when our poor pith-helmeted popper was taken clean out by… a bubble to the face. You know, one of the deadly ones.



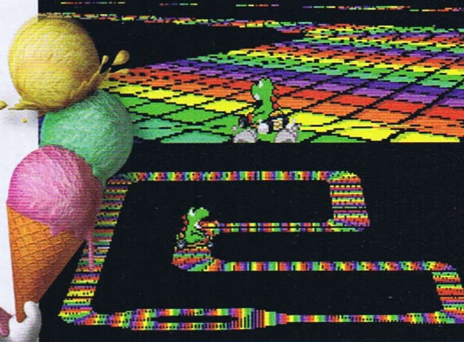






CLASSIC CHEAT
SUPER MARIO KART SNES (1992)

All the colours of the rainbow… that's how colourful our language was as we struggled past the 3am barrier to pull off the most fist-bitingly difficult shortcut on Rainbow Road, *Super Mario Kart*'s most sleeve-chewingly difficult course. With a mushroom up your sleeve, it was just about possible to hit the track at an angle and cut 13 seconds off your lap time, as well as dodging a dangerous Thwomp-ridden section entirely. We saw the milkman pulling around the corner outside before we saw Yoshi do what we frickin' well told him.



△ Bright, bendy and bloody annoying, Rainbow Road made us want to throttle Yoshi…

CAREER GRAPH: BOO

Get into the spirit of things with Nintendo's most loved spectre

+5 +4 +3 +2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Super Mario Bros 3 (1988): Originally monickered *Boo Diddly*. Oh, ask your gran.

Super Mario World (1990): Big Boo? Making faces isn't big or clever, you.

Super Mario Kart (1992): Wanders softly as a cloud – and nicks your stars. Git!

Super Mario Land 2 (1992): The same spook on GB, but now black and white.

Yoshi's Island (1995): Taught how to suck eggs by the Yoshter. Doesn't like it.

Super Mario RPG (1996): L'il Boo tries to do cute. You're a ghost.

Super Mario 64 (1997): Has been eating coins – and entire worlds – for tea.

Mario Kart 64 (1997): Back on thieving duty, and in da (haunted) house.

Yoshi's Story (1998): Hundreds turn up. For the free omelette dinner, probably.

Super Mario Bros. Deluxe (1999): Haunts Mario in the superb You vs Boo mini-race.

Mario Tennis 64 (2000): 'Telesa' (Japanese for ghost) is now 'Teresa'. Gender crisis!

CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH



CLASSIC BOSS
WRECKIN' CREW: NES (1985)

An interesting one, this. In his most famously shirtless adventure, Mario took a hammer to the building site of Foreman Spike – a looky-likey who some wobbly-eyed conspiracy nuts reckon was the blueprint for none other than Sir Wario of Evilshire. Cut to 1998, and a Japan-only update of Wrecking Crew for the SNES has given bossman Spike a makeover. The chin… the nose… the facial hair… throw in a few pies and give him a set of moustache-sculpting scissors for Christmas, and what do you have?

△ Different difficulty settings meant different start points.



CLASSIC LEVEL
PERFECT DARK
NINTENDO 64 (2000)

No matter how hard the new *Perfect Dark* tries, it isn't a patch on the 96%-rated Nintendo 64 original. The Hostage One level – which we first played at a games expo – was a stunner on its own. Jo Dark's meaty mission: rescue boss Carrington from what they call a 'hostage situation' inside his own seaside villa. It was a packed level: snipe a pair of Datadyne's blue stormtroopers from the top of a cliff; take down a collection of rooftop snipers; enjoy a sweaty sneak through the villa itself; race against time to gun down hackers at workstations; and, finally, win a tricky bullet-based argument in the villa's cellars.

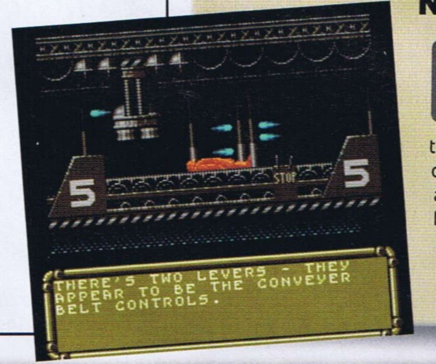
The beauty of Hostage One wasn't just the flawless shooting, but the presents that Rare threw in, regardless of whether it was your birthday. Shooting crates unveiled hidden guns of lip-smacking power, and you could shatter the billions of wine bottles in the basement, earning a sarky comment from the disembodied voice of Carrington if you completely destroyed his plonk.

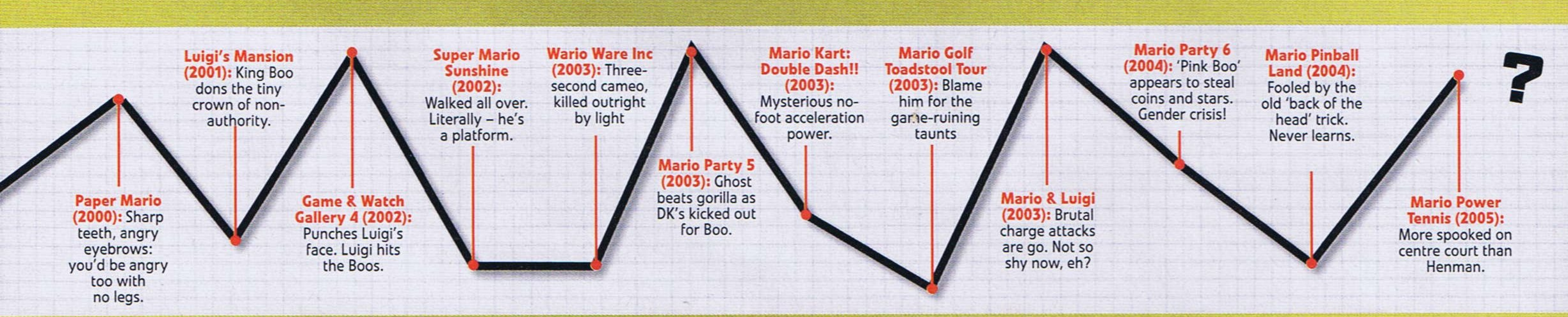
We still remember receiving a video from someone who'd managed to exploit a glitch in PD's first level that let him stand on a guard's head, fall 'through' the first door, and drop 20 storeys through empty space and into the Datadyne lift in 11 seconds. Let's see Xbox 360 do that…

LOST CLASSIC
NIGHTSHADE: NES (1991)



There's nothing quite as upsetting as a 'Part 1' that doesn't have a corresponding 'Part 2' – except a kitten with three legs. So here's the tear-inducing *Nightshade*, a brave, icon-driven adventure starring an eponymous (and inexplicably red) detective, and his quest to do over the sphinx-like crimelord Sutekh. Irreverent and funny, it had two unique features: a 'popularity meter' that opened up new options if you made like a good boy, and quick cutaway fight scenes featuring a policeman who'd hammer you with his fists like they were going out of fashion. *Nightshade* sank like a rock-eating fish.





30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us at...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

"Assgassinated"

I was short of cash the other day and, being a gambling man, decided to make a little wager with a mate who'd popped round to play *Burnout 2*. We decided on a best of three: if I won, he'd give me the tenner I needed to see the *Wallace & Gromit* movie with my girlfriend. If he won, I'd give him the game (I wasn't too bothered, having got my money's worth out of it).

He won the first race, I won the second and, after a dodgy start in the third, I made the comeback of the century and was finally on the road to popcorn, plasticene and, erm, petting. The end was in sight, the road was clear of traffic. I was home free and the sweet smell of toffee bon-bons was in the air.

Unfortunately for me, though, there was something else in the air as well, something far more potent, and as I approached the line, taking a deep breath ready for that inevitable sigh of joyous relief, it became painfully clear exactly what it was. For at that moment my nasal passages had been violated by the single most horrendous guff ever to be unleashed this side of Hell, causing my thumb to slip involuntarily from the control stick. This sent my beautiful white Roadster veering across the divide and onto a collision course with a juggernaut emerging from a slip road.

I thought I was blind for a moment, but after wiping away the tears, I held my breath and peered through the murky atmosphere, just in time to flick the stick and drift the car from its impending doom. It skidded 180 degrees and ended up with its back to victory. In the distance I could see a yellow '2nd' sign tearing up the road. There was no time to turn around, and realising I had nothing to lose except a game and a girlfriend, I began reversing towards an achingly close finish, hoping there were no cars in the way. I wasn't quite fast enough though, and just as his sign switched to first and mine to second, we crossed the line.

Damn shame really. Still, I have to give him credit for his tactical prowess – it really was a perfectly placed gust, and there wasn't a lot I could do about it. He hadn't technically stopped me from winning, but had sent an evil spirit to do his malicious bidding – and, in the process, totally ruin my sense of smell, because since that terrible day, I've had a permanent whiff of rotting flesh stuck up my nose. Besides, things didn't go quite the way my (ex) friend had planned. He ended up making more skid marks than were strictly necessary, so there was a small consolation there.

The moral of this story? If you have a Gamecube buddy who's a bad loser and seems to have the faint aroma of a two-week-old egg sandwich wafting around his trousers, kick him out of your house, pronto. Otherwise you could well end up getting assgassinated during a seemingly innocent game of *Diddy Kong Racing* or something. Stay healthy, kids.

Jered Williams, Tiverton

***What a beautiful, moving story. I feel your pain (although I'm glad I can't smell it) and can only offer a free copy of* Mario Football *by way of consolation.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

I play games to escape from reality, not to relive it!
Ben Dormand, via email
***Good idea.* Ed**

He was even ready to throw Winnie The Pooh's stupid game in the bin.
Kalle Koskinen, Finland
***Best place for it.* Ed**

Pikmin has real English spewing.
Alexander Coles, Wiltshire
***So it does!* Ed**

No one with any intelligence would even consider a second look at that ever-so-sicking plumber.
Cameron Osbon, via email
***Sicking?* Ed**

You're entitled to an opinion. Who's with me?
Mark McGrath, Bearsden
***Anyone?* Ed**

"Variety"

How many shooters does the Revolution need? From recent rumours (that seem to be accurate) Ubisoft is making two new FPS titles for it, and at least one will be exclusive. This, in addition to *King Kong* and *Killing Day*, which are confirmed, could make four from Ubisoft alone. Then, of course, there's the small matter of *Metroid Prime 3* and more rumours of another FPS from Nintendo, plus many other companies who will probably bring shooters to the system.

This is really good, considering the lack of decent shooters on Gamecube, but isn't it overkill? They could end up flooding the market with very similar games, which could in turn deter the casual gamers Nintendo is trying to attract. I know the tech demos were varied, but nobody's going to make a fishing or cooking game with the stakes so high in the next gen market because they just won't sell. I'm thrilled to see big companies pledging support, but this lack of variety may backfire on Nintendo.

James Cook, Bournville

***The key word here is 'rumours'. The only hard fact anyone knows is that the controller seems perfect for FPS games, hence the gossip linking them to Revolution.* Ed**

"Four dongles"

A pair of Revolution controllers could be a drum kit, two swords or fists for a *Street Fighter* game, but what if they release special footstraps to stick them to your feet? You could have a *DDR* game without a dance mat, or you could actually run in *Track & Field*. And if you're really rich, you could get four dongles and have one for each limb, kind of like a virtual reality suit without all the… suit stuff.

Adam Parker, Chester

***I sincerely hope that nobody at Nintendo gets any funny ideas from this.* Ed**

"Least favourite"

While Nintendo are busy Revolutionising, they could spruce up everyone's least favourite series, *Mario Party*. I hated it because there was so little to it, and that's just not Nintendo. If *Mario Party* was on the Revolution, they could make an online RPG out of it, with stats like Luck for dice throws and Speed and Strength for minigames. Just think of the possibilities!

Eoin Connolly

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Thanks to everyone who wrote or emailed this month, including (but not limited to): Jacob Hebditch, Gwynedd; Joachim Johnsen, Norway; Simon Langdon, Ipswich; Cedric Van Rossem, Belgium; Sam Rose, Bingham; Ben Hooper, via email; Rory Whittle, Houghton-Le-Spring; Alasdair Henry, Morpeth; Jason Ashmore, via email; Stuart Innes, Airdrie; Steven Crossley, Bury; Tom Cooper, Gloucester; Aaron Self, via email; Philip Roberts, via email; Jamal Smith-

***Thousands of people enjoying* Mario Party *together… Reminds me of a dream I had, except there were only three people in it, and they weren't playing* Mario Party. Ed**

"New ways"

I see the images of the Revolution's controller and I smile. But then I thumb through some older issues of *NGC* and I'm brought back down to earth with an almighty bump. The expected launch titles – *Mario, Zelda, Smash Bros* and *Donkey Kong* – are just what I reckon Nintendo should be avoiding. Surely one of the very best things Nintendo could try to do to this industry is kill off the trend of churning out sequel after sequel just because it will sell – now there's a revolution. But Nintendo are as guilty as anyone of this – look at *Mario Party 7* if you don't believe me – and there seems to be no sign of them breaking the cycle.

I have no doubt that a Revolution version of *Smash Bros* would be excellent, but – correct me if I'm wrong – *Super Smash Bros Melée* was pretty good, no? So why convert an already decent game series onto unfamiliar hardware just to make it sell?

Recently I played *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*. Good game, yes, but the bongos were nothing more than a gimmick. If the game had been built to use only the controller, it would lose nothing for it, so what was the point of using the bongos for that particular game anyway? I'd wager that it was something like this: Nintendo had a desperately underused peripheral and needed an excuse to sell a good but unspectacular game as 'something you've never played before'.

I'm fed up with the excuse that, as they're aiming for 'new' gamers with the Revolution, another *Zelda* or *Mario* game will go down fine - it won't. They seem to be forgetting about us, the 'already gamers', those who are most likely to end up shelling out however much they'll be asking for a Rev when the time comes. How about trying to convert the unconverted with some completely new games, and not just another *Mario Tennis* with ultra-realistic racquet simulations? Nintendo is the most talented games developer in the business. I want to see it challenge itself. I want to see a Revolution launch title with unfamiliar faces, something that no one has ever played before.

'New ways to play games' seems to sum up Nintendo's ethos pretty well right now, but I'd appreciate some new games to play too.
Dan Robinson, Skipton

***I think we can safely assume that playing something like* Mario Tennis *on Revolution will be so different from the N64 and Gamecube experience that it might as well be a completely new game. No doubt the controller will inspire developers to create things that wouldn't be possible on traditional hardware, but we'll also see a good number of 'reimagined' classics.* Ed**



Bonus Letters

Why the hell was *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* the main game when in that issue *Metroid Prime 2* was also reviewed?
Samuel Kasim, London
***I'm still trying to figure that one out.* Ed**

Whenever I read the letter section of your mag, all I see is a mountain of people complaining about stuff that's only worth moaning about if you're a really sour old man
Jake Kingston, via email
***Like moaning about other people's letters?* Ed**

I really can't wait for when the Revolution is released. Have you got any ideas when it will be?
Anthony Tyreman, Middlesbrough
***No.* Ed**

I can't see 78-year-old arthritic Granny Biggins waving that controller around playing *Power Death: Kill Maim Hurt Revolution* for any length of time.
Chris Hawkins, Plymouth
***I can't see her waving anything, to be honest.* Ed**

"No hands"

I'm so sick and tired of games that feel like they've been playtested by a blind man with no hands! Take *Prince Of Persia 2: Warrior Within*. I only put up with the cumbersome and repetitive combat to get to the gorgeous and flowing platforming action that I loved from the first game.

One day I got through a particularly sticky bit of combat and had the reward of a large, spinning tower to climb up. Imagine my disgust when I found that because of a combination of the irksome camera and the prince's apparent refusal to jump when I wanted him to, I wasted all my sands of time trying to get him to perform a bread-and-butter jump from one platform to another. When all the sands had gone, it was a leap of faith, all the time with the knowledge that the last save point was about 20 minutes ago.

Of course, the prince once again decided not to obey my commands and plummeted to his death. I promptly snapped the disc in half and pledged not to buy the third *POP*. To me, the Nintendo difference is that when you die in *Zelda* or *Mario*, you know it's your fault, not the game's! I hate *POP2*!
Andrew Hatch, via email

***Well, it's probably best that you steer clear of the sequel then…* Ed**

"Little gem"

On one of many trips to my local games shop, I noticed an odd sight on one of the shelves in the dank, dark DS corner. Going in for a closer look, I noticed the box of one game was thinner than normal, and black – a copy of *Lost In Blue*, on sale for £25! Wasting no time, I bought it and ran home to play this little gem, but on the bus I noticed that the box said: "Not for sale, rental or use outside the US, Canada, Latin

Graham, London; Thomas Kristensen, Denmark; Jesper Ulstrup, Denmark; Sebastiaan Van Severen, Belgium; Josiah Mainwaring, via email; Jonathan Barron, Nottingham; Luke Bowyer, Cheshire; Rowan Brown, Bath; Andrew Bell, Seaham; James Kelly, Ireland; Dave Challis, via email. Thank you all!



CORRECTION CORNER

In your review of *Battalion Wars*, I'm pretty sure that there isn't a hidden *Metal Gear Solid* level in *Pikmin 2*.
Dominic Carr, London

***Correct, and many thanks to the 2,000 other people who spotted this.* Ed**

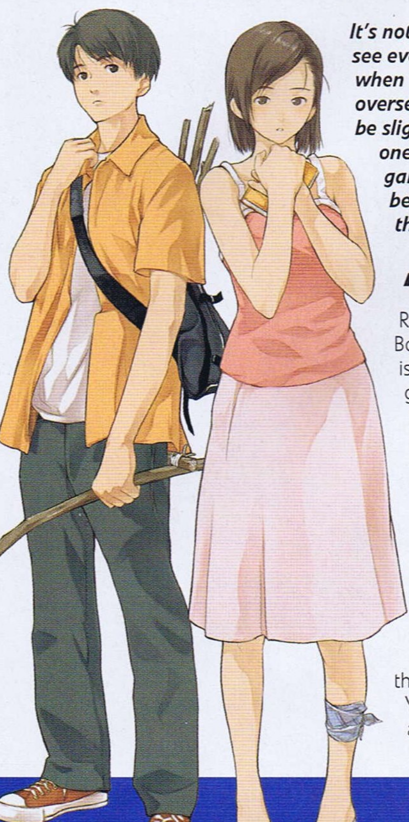
Why does issue 113's NGC Pocket section say 'Issue 10, October 2005' when the rest of the magazine is from December, and it's actually issue 12 of NGC Pocket? And who is the Blue Flash? What's wrong with you people?
James Deacon, via email

***I have absolutely no idea.* Ed**



"If that wench dies once more…"

America or South America." Is this a usual thing to happen in shops – selling import games on the cheap? Also, I totally agree with Geraint's review – it's the most annoying yet addictive game ever. If that wench dies once more, I swear I'll break more than her glasses.
Lee Henson, Whitburn



It's not something you see every day, but when you consider that overseas prices tend to be slightly less than UK ones, maybe import games don't need to be as expensive as they used to be. Ed

"Smells"

Regarding Chris Bowman's letter in issue 113 [which guessed that the new *Zelda* game would involve detecting smells when in Link's werewolf form]. Although this would be welcome, I don't think it would be likely, as *Discworld Noir* for the PC is very similar. Your character also has the ability to turn into a werewolf at will and use smell as sight. Now I personally don't think that Nintendo would copy another game, being one of the most original game companies in the world. Maybe I'm wrong, and the smell feature could be like the Lens Of Truth, revealing the true scene. Either that or Nintendo will have to admit defeat in its originality competition.
Ian Wallbridge, via email

There's something called Dog's Life for PS2, with also uses visible 'smells' as hints for puzzles. Incidentally, that game lets you poo on the floor, pick it up in your mouth and fling it at a postman. I wonder if Nintendo will borrow that idea. Ed

"Details"

I think it's time Nintendo started releasing details about Revolution and getting it advertised. This Christmas, thousands of people will be rushing into shops for their Xbox 360, and those who don't will be getting their PS3 a few months later. News about these two consoles is spreading fast, but the only people talking about Revolution in a good way are hardcore Nintendo fans.

Nintendo needs to convince everybody else how good the Revolution is, instead of keeping things like graphics, cost, release dates and the full controller details to themselves. Full details of the other consoles are out now and people are saving up to buy them. If Nintendo advertises its machine before the Christmas rush, they can convince the average gamer to wait a few months for something truly special. At the moment, though, people are either unaware of Revolution or unwilling to wait for something that will 'probably be for kids anyway', which is what a lot of people think.
Jack Parker, Rhyl

But you can't put out an ad campaign telling people not to spend their money. Nintendo tried it a couple of times in the past, with the SNES ('worth its wait in gold… and 32,000 other colours') and the N64 ('you can't buy this'), for which they were roundly and rightly ridiculed. This time they'll be pitching Revolution as something you should buy as well as a PS3 or Xbox 360. Ed

"You said"

Apparently you said that it took you 30-odd hours to beat *Resident Evil 4* on your first go. Well, I managed to beat it in 13 hours and 57 minutes. I did save 84 times, but my hit ratio was 90%. Can I shut up and go home now?
Josef Walters, Swansea

Yes. Ed

"Virtual console"

I dug out my N64 for a nice spot of mass murder in *Perfect Dark* yesterday, and it brought back a wave of nostalgia. In the days of N64, the only thing that saved us from the crippling summer-long waits between *Mario 64* and *Ocarina Of Time* was Rare. Everything it put out was gold, from *GoldenEye* and *Banjo Kazooie* to *Donkey Kong 64* and *Jet Force Gemini*. The games were long, complex, challenging and fun.

CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…

"Another movie"

We've created another movie in the *Mario* saga. It starts where the previous one ended, with Luigi seeming victorious at the end of his fight with his brother. However, in this movie the tables have turned as an unlikely ally emerges to aid Mario in his fight against Luigi. With the help of a flashback, we learn why he seeks revenge. Oh, and we aren't sad and we do have lives – we were just bored!
Andrew, Simon and Grant

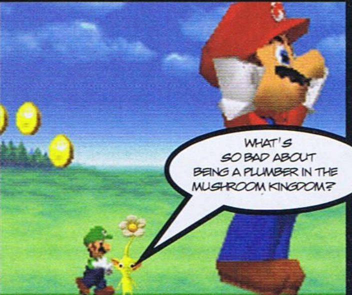
I watched it twice and I'm still none the wiser. But nice work anyway. Ed



Grintendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY GARETH MARTIN









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK



I think it's important for Nintendo not to forget that N64 period because, in all honesty, Rare was what made the console worth keeping in the first place. So my question is this: will we see those Rare classics on Revolution? It's all well and good to resurrect classics from Nintendo's amazing history, but the fact of the matter is that Nintendo's N64 output was infuriatingly sparse, and I feel that if we only see first-party games on Revolution's virtual console, it'll be rewriting history.

It's not just Rare either; there's a wealth of great third-party games in Nintendo's history books that are just as remarkable as its own output. It's just as important to me to be able to rediscover *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* as it is to give *A Link To The Past* another go. The thing is, all of the significant Nintendo games of the past couple of decades have already been re-released by Nintendo in some form. The best *Zelda* and *Mario* games have appeared in GBA versions that make any further revision redundant, and *Super Mario Bros* must be available in about 10 formats by now. If Nintendo sticks to its own output exclusively, all we'll have is a series of games that most of us have already shelled out another £30 for in re-release form, possibly with a few extra bits tacked onto them.

If Nintendo really wants to make the concept catch fire, it needs to showcase some lost gems like the woefully underrated *Jet Force Gemini* or the *Mario Kart*-topping single-player mode of *Diddy Kong Racing*, otherwise it's a waste of an opportunity. Not only can Nintendo attract new customers by showing off an entire legacy, but it can also give folks like me with a knackered N64 a chance to play the many, many games I can't get to work any more. That said, if Nintendo can't get the rights to sell these games then we won't have much choice in the matter. Do you think Nintendo will stick to its own first-party established classics, or will we see some obscurities and third-party titles too?
Marco Belmonte, Bromley

***I certainly hope plenty of third-party titles are included, but it all depends on whether Nintendo can persuade companies to join in. It sold Rare to Microsoft, so they'd have to come to some kind of mutually beneficial arrangement that doesn't involve Xbox 360 sequels suffering in comparison to the output from Rare's glory days.* Ed**

"Collectors"

I have to admit that the Game Boy Micro looks very dandy (more so than the SP or DS) but I think it's too expensive for old technology, and you always buy a console or handheld for the games, not the hardware. From the games perspective, nobody really needs a Micro. If you want to play older GB games, you buy an SP. If you want to play GBA and DS games, you buy a DS. I love the backlit screens of the DS and I know that the backlit screen of the Micro is better, but then you have a smaller screen, which I don't like. Micro is only for collectors.
Henrie van Meurs, Holland

***Go and play* Gunstar Future Heroes *on it, then try telling me you don't want one!* Ed**

"Rather rigid"

Regarding your comment about sexism in *Lost In Blue*. The game was made in Japan, and Japanese culture is still rather rigid about the roles males and females play in society. Just think about it this way – Skye needs Keith to do what he does to keep herself alive, and Keith needs Skye to do what she does to keep himself alive. They use each other's talents to make the arrangement mutually beneficial.

Apparently, Skye has horrible eyesight. Look at when Keith first meets her and she breaks her glasses – she fell walking on flat ground. Obviously she can't climb logs or jump across gaps on her own. Even if you could tell her that there's a log, she probably couldn't get over it safely. Sure, Keith can probably help braid a rope, but it's more important to go out and gather food while Skye works in the cave.

It could have been possible to choose which character to play as the hunter, but is it really worth the extra programming just for this?
Thomas Stevens, Durham

***Leaving the little lady at home is just sensible, not sexist.* Ed**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions fudged by the NGC pocket calculator.

My brother and I have a DS each and would like to play online simultaneously with a USB adapter in our own home. Is this possible?
Gordon Yeung, Cardiff

Yes. The USB thing supports up to five simultaneous connections.

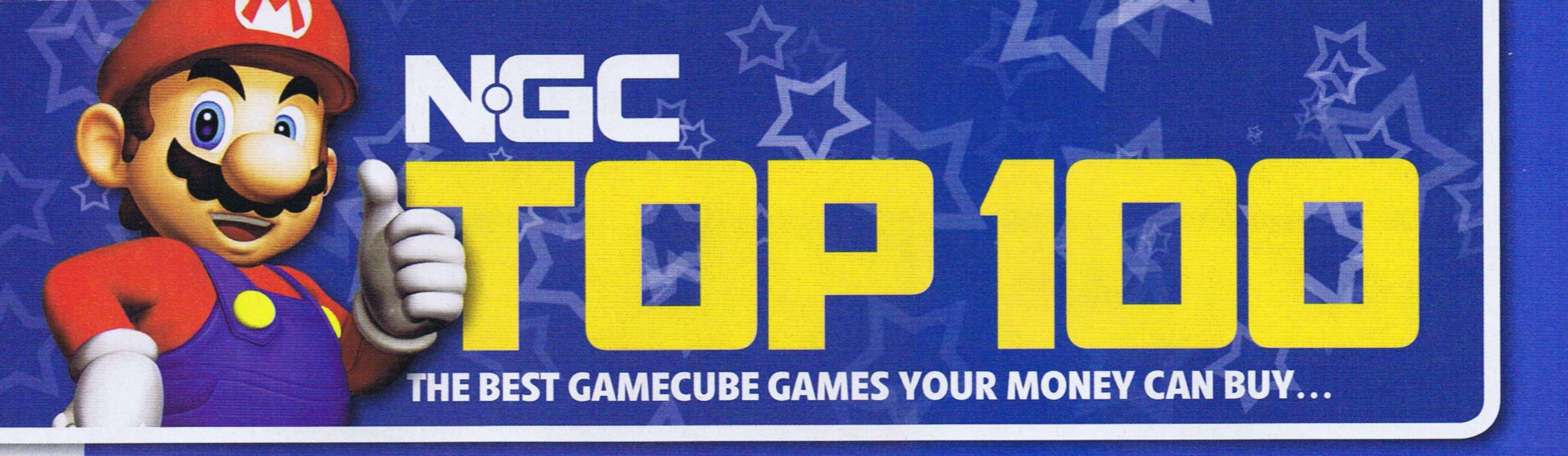
I was clearing out my attic when I stumbled across an old copy of the game Actraiser for the Super Famicom. How much do you think it's worth? Not that I would ever, ever sell it – it's probably a collector's item... I hope. Just wondering though.
Mark Allen, Scarborough

You might want to keep hold of it for a few decades because it's as common as muck right now. A quick check on eBay shows unsold copies listed at £1.99. Sorry.

I would like to buy a new game for my DS. I already own Pac-Pix and I could complete it in just one afternoon (I'm still enjoying it, though). I want a game that takes at least one week to complete, but it has to be action-packed, full of surprises and of perfect quality. Maybe I should buy Mario Kart DS, *but I already own it for Gamecube. I also saw* Nanostray *in one of your previous mags and it seems to be kind of cool. You'll probably say I have to buy Nintendogs, but I'm not so sure about it. Please help me out here!*
Gilles Reuse, Belgium

Have a crack at Advance Wars – it'll last you for months, not weeks, and it's as close to perfect quality as you're likely to see. Also, Mario Kart DS is sufficiently different from the Gamecube version to make it well worth your time.





NGC TOP 100

THE BEST GAMECUBE GAMES YOUR MONEY CAN BUY…



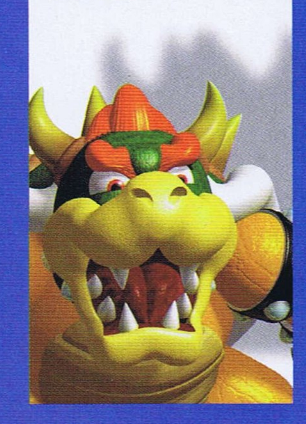
WHY YOU NEED IT!



Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide! It's got:

- **Our 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **Details of which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more, you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of each game, so if you don't have the relevant back issue, you can still find out the most important things about it.**
- **Highlighted games, which go into a little more detail. As the list gets updated, the highlights will also change.**



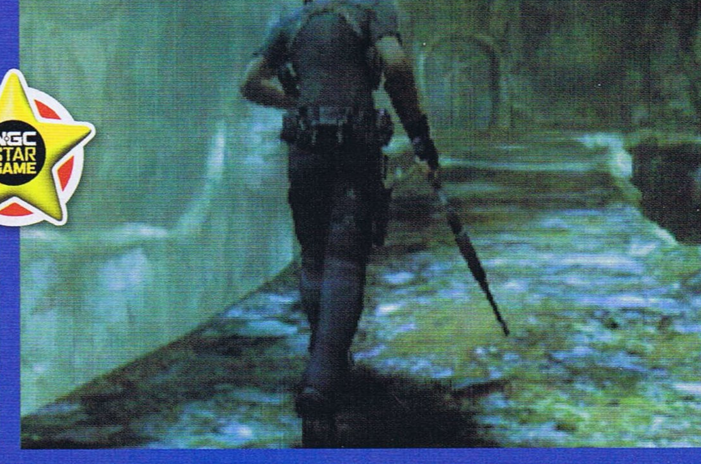
1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

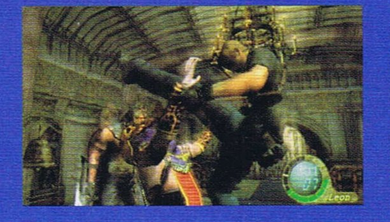
CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

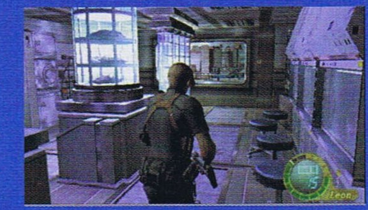
NGC STAR GAME











2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER — 97

NGC STAR GAME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Pixar flick and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.







3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

NGC STAR GAME

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slowdown, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.



4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

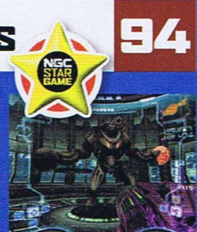



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story about vandalism and poisonous brown slime. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. It's everything you never knew you always wanted.



5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94



NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.

6 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 93




NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, bizarre weapons from slippery bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.



7 F-ZERO GX 92



NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You'll never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?

8 PIKMIN 2 92




NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has shown himself to be less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure, along with two new types of Pikmin to help them. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.



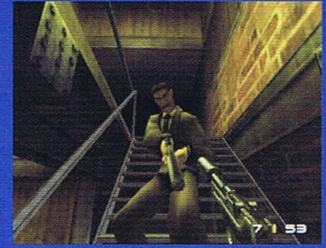
9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91



NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco has dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.

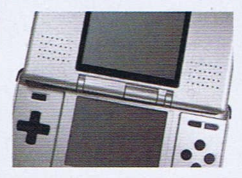
10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'Splitters. This means shooting things. A lot. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, letting you wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. The Multiplayer mode is the icing on the cake. You'll love every second of this.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

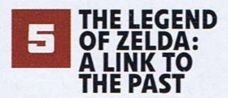
2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!
Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.

3 WARIO WARE
Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep coming back to.

4 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA
An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.

5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
Undoubtedly one of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.

6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.

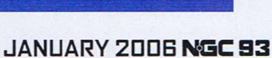


7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
It's the same as before – catch 'em all and send 'em into battle – but it's still the most entertaining RPG ever.

8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
Nabs the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions and, if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.

9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION
Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games: a sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing level of difficulty.

10 GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES
Treasure makes old-school shooting seem like the freshest thing on earth.



DIRECTORY
The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/68
All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have ludicrous amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



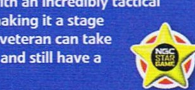
12 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91
UBISOFT ■ NGC/91
Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops. Well, such is life, but at least you get to do a bit of milking.



13 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN — 91
EIDOS ■ NGC/82
Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.



14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/104
If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a stage where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.





15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Ubisoft shows other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.

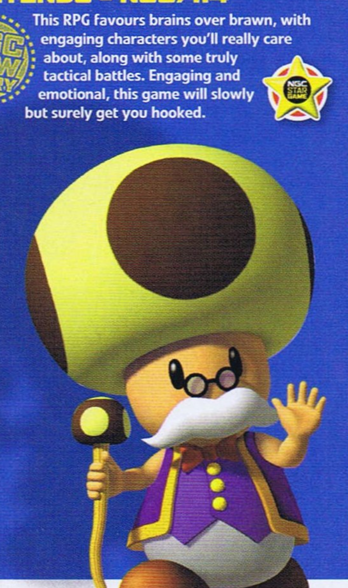


16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/100
With Mario's unique ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what it does best – creating unique games.



17 FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/114
NGC NEW ENTRY
This RPG favours brains over brawn, with engaging characters you'll really care about, along with some truly tactical battles. Engaging and emotional, this game will slowly but surely get you hooked.





18 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is magic.

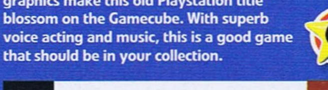
19 BATTALION WARS — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/113
With all the hallmarks of the brilliant *Advance Wars*, *Battalion Wars* perfectly balances action with strategy. Commanding armies over vast, detailed landscapes with total control, you'll be thoroughly addicted by the awesome gameplay and vibrant graphics.

20 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90
CAPCOM ■ NGC/84
Some people love the unusual look; some people hate it. Either way, get past the cel shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only add to the feel, letting you pull off amazing combos. Some of the puzzles are illogical, which can be frustrating, but its elegant design and nice touches will still win you over.

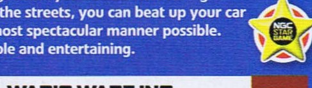
21 SECOND SIGHT — 90
CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97
Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. Telekinetic powers produce some intriguing gameplay and the compelling plot and quality cutscenes are engaging. Superbly produced, this is a memorable game.



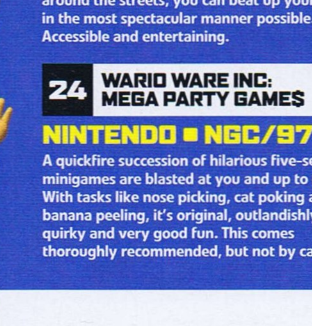
22 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES — 90
KONAMI ■ NGC/91
A superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on the Gamecube. With superb voice acting and music, this is a good game that should be in your collection.



23 BURNOUT 2 — 90
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80
The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. And then there is the crashing. When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.



24 WARIO WARE INC: MEGA PARTY GAME$ — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/97
A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended, but not by cats.



TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Simply put, it's bongo brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as it ever did, but now it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun that rockets along.

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE I & 2 — 90
SEGA ■ NGC/78
This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one! 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.

26 1080° AVALANCHE — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/89
More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.

27 NBA STREET V3 — 90
EA ■ NGC/104
Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What more do you need?



28 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/98
Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



29 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90
SEGA ■ NGC/81
Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The black holes in the universe of your quest for missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks a bit dated now.

30 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 — 90



SCI ■ NGC/86
Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is superior to the original *Conflict: Desert Storm* in every way – it looks better, sounds better and plays better, and there's more of everything too! There's a completely new aspect to this one as well – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of daring heroics as you try to save each member of your team.

31 WORMS 3D — 90
SEGA ■ NGC/87
You know the score – you have four worms that must kill all the other worms. The special weapons are still crazy (sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade), but the real difference is that, being 3D, it's harder to hit your targets, affecting your strategies for worm slaughter.

32 ETERNAL DARKNESS 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
A horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… There are a few weaknesses in the combat but, other than that, this is survival horror that spans 20 centuries and is nearly perfect.

33 LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/102
This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – *Tetra's Trackers* – had been included.

34 RESIDENT EVIL 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore, then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are a tad annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

35 SPLINTER CELL 89
UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish, although the 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying.

36 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 89
SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that's about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict: Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is cracking good fun as well.

37 SSX 3 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down to the bottom. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it initially seems, but it's a superb game.

38 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer makes it worthwhile.

39 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game. Although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of the game more than outweighs that problem.

40 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. You'll probably find lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, though you won't see them if you have other interests – you know, like a job or a life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single-player fighter.

DEF JAM: VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, without any substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks amazing, and it doesn't have any of those boring on-foot sections.

41 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's too darn short. Apart from that, his escapades in the newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and *Ghostbusters*. The little man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.



42 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness* sticks monkeys in balls, and it's up to you to roll them around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas, balancing on perilous ledges and racing to beat the clock. It's addictive stuff, but if the main game isn't enough, there are loads of minigames too. These include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

43 TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT 88
EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised. Instead, it just gave *TimeSplitters 2* a bit of a spring clean. The game has been gorgeously designed and it's packed with juicy extras. The trademark humour is still in place, it's fantastic fun and the multiplayer mode is as great as you'd expect it to be.

44 NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball with EA's successful *Street* template. You just don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless real-life stats are your thing, *NBA Street* has got it all. Three-on-three action, combos and special moves are all crammed into a very fun game.

45 DONKEY KONGA 2 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to get tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough mini games, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

46 NHL 2006 88
EA ■ NGC/112
EA has made some big changes this time around, taking the arcade-friendly approach that made the *NHL* series such a hit in the first place back on the Sega Mega Drive. We loved it then, and we love it now – with real-time ice trails, the rink has never looked so good.

47 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This might sound odd, but it all makes sense in practice. Be warned: you'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

48 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that, and a few tweaks to defensive plays and Franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

49 DEF JAM: VENDETTA 87
EA ■ NGC/82
Famous rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start off as a rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, and then you'll have the pick of the ladies – though their blokes won't be too happy. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

50 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on guys, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

51 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful-looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

52 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best *Star Wars* game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note that the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

53 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87
CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

54 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful-looking action adventure that has you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade too. Even the mini games are fun! The world is huge and detailed, but it's slightly easy and won't last as long as you'll want it to.

55 FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86
SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're going to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all, this is good looking and ambitious.

56 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

DIRECTORY
The best Gamecube games around

57 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was a killer racer in its day, but was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. *Burnout* itself is worth a look though, and won't disappoint.

58 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought that rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

59 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

60 XIII 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/88
Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (there are guns that literally go 'bam'...) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great Multiplayer mode.

61 POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/113
Pokémon XD is all about 'snagging', which basically means filling your Pokédex with 'mon that have been sneakily snatched from other trainers during battle. It sounds simple, but the strategic combat is as addictive as ever and beautifully realised, making this a must for Pokémon fans.

62 NFL 2K3 86
SEGA ■ NGC/79
Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out of date.

63 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86
EA ■ NGC/87
Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack'n'slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom via some nifty spider action.

64 NBA LIVE 2004 86
EA ■ NGC/88
Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options too. It's soulless but slick.

65 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85
CAPCOM ■ NGC/78
Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere then...).

66 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85
NINTENDO ■ NGC/95
For a *Mario* game, there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

67 IKARUGA 85
ATARI ■ NGC/80
Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the Easy setting. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to hit the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all. A splendid space crusade.



68 FIFA 2004 85
EA ■ NGC/87
Continuing the healthy rivalry between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, *FIFA 2004* is the best football sim you can get on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia for the ultimate in realism. The free kick system has been tweaked, and the corner kicks are menu-driven. It's all here in a beautiful version of the beautiful game.

69 EXTREME G 3 85
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This is an underrated gem. It's very, very fast, the tracks are huge and well-designed, the bikes are cool and the inventive weapons are stunning to use. This time there's an upgrade system too, with bike and weapon enhancements available, and this adds a much-needed tactical element to the game.

70 SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY 84
UBISOFT ■ NGC/106
This was the game that was supposed to give the *Splinter Cell* series a kick up the arse. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spit and polish job – for example, the levels are no longer linear – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

71 SPIDER-MAN 2 84
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96
Here's a game that actually makes you feel like a superhero. Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll feel the joy of being Spider-Man, doing whatever a spider can. The only drawbacks are that it doesn't look particularly pretty and the missions are quite limited, but it's still an amazing experience.

72 KILLER 7 84
CAPCOM ■ NGC/109
Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the Heaven's Smiles.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

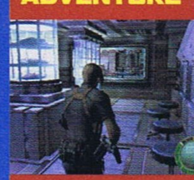
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE
The thinking man's RPG and the best strategy title on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Cranks up the action, taking the *Resident Evil* series to new heights.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH 84
VIVENDI ■ NGC/89
Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially long life. While it lasts, you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing crooks and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot on and the fiddly controls are the only letdown.

74 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84
NINTENDO ■ NGC/93
The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode, but if you're a fan, you'll love it.

75 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84
NAMCO ■ NGC/100
This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good-looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will have you gnawing your arm off, too.

76 RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC 84
UBISOFT ■ NGC/78
Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. However, it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable mini games. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

77 ISS2 83
KONAMI ■ NGC/68
This series was untouchable for a while, but then EA found out and made its *FIFA* games loads better, leaving the Gamecube *ISS* behind in its wake. *ISS2* is a good game with great commentary, but we were expecting much more of it and, unfortunately, these expectations weren't met.



78 STAR WARS: REBEL STRIKE 83
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88
Star Wars is all about dogfights with screaming TIE fighters and taking on vast Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. Unfortunately, *Rebel Strike* introduces these pedestrian sections, and they're a bit of a trudge, ruining the excitement of the rest of the game. However, like its predecessors, it looks and sounds great, and the two-player Rogue Leader mode is outstanding, bringing the thrills of the movies to life.

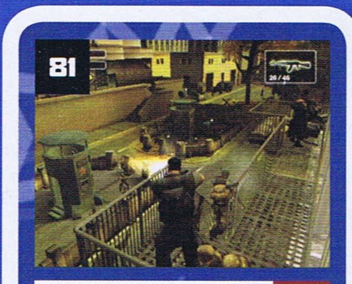
79 SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER 83
TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94
Don't be fooled by the name – this is very silly! For £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. The killing can get a bit relentless, and you can forget about stealth and fancy gadgets, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's your man.

80 BATEN KAITOS 83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately, it's let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

81



FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83

EA ■ NGC/86

Although much less serious in tone and delivery than *Conflict: Desert Storm 2*, this is still a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Unfortunately, there are some issues with the controls – aiming in first-person mode is pretty much impossible – but if you look beyond these issues, you'll find an absorbing and, most importantly, fun game that offers both straight-up blasting thrills alongside more tactical elements.

82 FIFA 2003 83

EA ■ NGC/75

Having had the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish itself as the king of the football game. The result was a remarkably in-depth and well-presented version of virtual soccer. Along with the correct names and kit, the movement of the players and flow of the game are vastly improved.

83 SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR 82

SEGA ■ NGC/112

You take control of Spartan, a conveniently named Spartan warrior, as he sets out to dismember every single Roman in the world. With up to 200 people on-screen at any given time, this is hectic, violent and bloody, and just how war should be. With historical accuracy put to one side, this is great fun.

84 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode unfortunately features a lot of Bam Margera, so if you find him annoying, there's a good chance you won't like this. The rest is great, keeping the classic *Tony Hawk* gameplay and including parts of the first three games – with a timer!



85 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 82

SEGA ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls, however (a monkey's natural habitat), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series, and there are new mini games and over 100 levels.



86 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and your task is to defeat a rock-hard army of robots. The camera can be awkward, though, and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

MY TOP 10 GAMES BY NINJA POPE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
The redefining moment of a classic series and a game worthy of the *Resident Evil* name.

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
Simply one of the best games this generation.

IKARUGA
One of the most tranquil endings to a game. Ever.

DONKEY KONGA
A tie-wearing gorilla. Bongos. What else could you ever need?

SOUL CALIBUR II
Give Link a good kicking in a safe and secure environment.

STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON
"Luke, you've turned off your targeting computer. What's wrong?" "Nothing." Boom.

METROID PRIME
The last *Metroid* game was on SNES. Five minutes into this, and you know why it took so long.

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
Beat up Pikachu. Greatly satisfying.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORD ADVENTURES
Basically the most fun you'll have in a very long while.

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2
Four-way Monkey Target. Enough said.

Want to get in the mag? Send us your top 10 games, with a pic of yourself, to: My Top 10, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, or you can email us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk

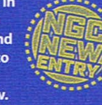
87 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REVOLUTION 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

This is a new idea and a new direction for *PSO* card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you're familiar with the original *PSO* though and, unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter to play this.

88 SSX ON TOUR 82

EA ■ NGC/114



More downhill slick tricks and stunts, in the same vein as *SSX 3*. This time you can speed down the slopes on skis, and there are over 100 tough challenges to complete. It's demanding, enjoyable and satisfying, but nothing really new.

89 THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant or sound that great, but as with all games that have no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

90 NFL STREET 2 81

EA ■ NGC/103

This game tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell, boasting a new ability that lets you run around the walls, *Prince of Persia*-style, to gain height when catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

91 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated, that doesn't mean the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

92 TIGER WOODS 06 81

EA ■ NGC/112

Tiger Woods's almost perfect swing system has had a few tweaks for 2006. The ball is now controlled by the C-stick and putting is now on the analogue stick. Despite being tricky to get used to, the classic *Tiger Woods* gameplay remains intact, making this one of the best golf sims available.

93 TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND 81

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/114

Skate fans can kiss goodbye to their social lives with this massive, sprawling game. There are loads of missions, an optional BMX to try, a vast Los Angeles-themed skatepark, and no loading screens to distract you from your grinding.

NGC NEW ENTRY

94 AGGRESSIVE INLINE 81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72

A top-class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

95 THE SIMS 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – entirely meaningless, but you want to keep doing it anyway.

96 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is part of EA's *F1* series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There's a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

97 NHL 2005 80

EA ■ NGC/99

This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved. However, if you dislike the sport, there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans, though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

98 CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE 80

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/114



Win World War II all over again in this fast, furious and fun shooter. Okay, so the AI is limited and the gameplay linear, but when you're blasting your way through the frantic, varied missions, you simply won't have time to notice these flaws.

99 MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MK*s, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

100 BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D, you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat and one level has you beating up cowardly lions.









MARIO'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1) Have a 'proper' game - starring yours truly - out for Revolution's launch - even if I break Shigsy in the process.

2) I promise not to play with anyone other than Nintendo ever again. Even if they offer me money. Or sweets.

3) I promise to shave off my moustache.

4) I promise to shave off Peach's moustache.

5) Practise new sports (Mario Lacrosse? Mario Curling? Mario Power Walking?).

6) Sort out the garage and throw out all my old junk, like my stupid Double Dash Kart and that FLUDD!

7) Wash my dungarees.

8) Clean Yoshi's cage out. And possibly feed him. Possibly.

9) Stop dreaming about Daisy.

10) Give up smoking... (okay, maybe not that one!)


small but perfectly reformed
GAME BOY micro
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